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Spring 5-12-2016

How Can Instructional Staff be Effectively Introduced to a Standards-Based Grading Policy?

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching

Joseph Patrick Millard

Hamline University, jmillard01@hamline.edu

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Millard, J. “How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?” (2016).

Standards-based grading is a style of grading developed over the last 30 years as a means for schools to create agreed upon standards for learning and grading (McMillan, 2000).

While there may be school policies and philosophies motivating a teacher’s grading system, there is no universal method or standard for the assessment of American students. Grading practices may vary from school to school, subject to subject, and classroom to classroom. As a result, teachers’ grading policies have the potential to become subjective, based more on teacher experience and preference than a student’s mastery of a subject. Subjective grading is problematic because, depending on their teachers, it can send mixed messages to students about what is important to learn. Standards-based grading is a more objective form of grading that uses common summative assessments to determine grades and guide instruction.

Standards-based grading is purported to give teachers a way to provide students with accurate and easy to understand scores, but its implementation has proven somewhat difficult. Standards-based grading requires a significant shift in the way many teachers assess their students, and at times, has been very unpopular amongst some teachers who have been asked to implement it (Clements, 2012). The change to a standards-based grading policy requires great care, extensive planning, and input from everyone involved in instruction. A key step towards implementing a standards-based grading policy is introducing it to instructional staff, professionals responsible for assisting with student learning, so this capstone seeks to answer the question, “How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?” Through the analysis of existing literature, and a case-study of the introduction of standards-based grading to a group of instructional staff, this capstone will provide educators with information on the most effective ways to introduce a standards-based grading policy to instructional staff.

“HOW CAN INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF BE EFFECTIVELY INTRODUCED TO A
STANDARDS-BASED GRADING POLICY?”

By

Joseph Millard

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in Teaching

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

May 2016

Primary Advisor: Karen Moroz
Secondary Advisor: Jon Fila
Peer Reviewer: Natasha Pelovsky

To Gabby, Mom, Dad, Melissa, and especially Andrew for providing such wonderful guidance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff at Hennepin Technical College's Gateway to College Program as well as Intermediate District 287's administrative staff. Without the support of these people, I would not have been able to complete this study. I would also like to thank the staff in the Hamline Graduate Education Department for their assistance and patience. Lastly, I would like to thank the members of my capstone committee for taking the time to help me make this project a success.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of Researcher

In my six years of teaching, I have consistently grappled with the question of whether or not I am accurately assessing my students' achievement. I hate to think that, perhaps, I have failed a student who, despite their scores, had the skills to pass a course, or conversely, that I may have passed a student who was not ready to move on to the next stage in their education simply because they amassed enough points for a passing grade.

Throughout my own time as a high school and college student, I was used to being assessed based on my teachers' personal standards. In some cases, that meant passing a few tests to move on to the next grade, and in others it meant having good attendance, behaving in-line with the teacher's expectations, completing my daily work, and/or adhering to a variety of other criteria that did not necessarily assess my abilities but may have taught me responsibility and citizenship. In some cases, it seemed that my grades were calculated fairly arbitrarily. In fact, in one course, I was able to replace my lowest test score with a perfect score simply because I came to class every day.

As a result of this varied, personal experience with grading, when I began my teaching career, I expected to use some of my personal expectations as a means to grade my students. However, I began teaching at a time when my school's philosophy and expectations surrounding grading were going through some major changes. That year, I was forced to think deeply about what it means to give a grade.

Soon after I began my student teaching, I was introduced to the concept of standards-based grading, a method of grading which puts the primary focus of a student's grade on whether

or not they have met the academic standards of a course. In the case of my school, the standards for each course were going to be based on those created by The Minnesota Department of Education. Administration wanted their staff to move away from using non-academic standards like behavior, late work, participation, and citizenship to influence a student's academic records. Like myself, the rest of the staff was overwhelmingly new to standards-based grading, so there were no sage teachers to guide us in this shift in our practice. As a school, we had to sort through a lot of information to try and make sense of standards-based grading.

The motivation for changing grading practices was that some administrators felt, depending on which teacher they were assigned, a student might be getting a better or worse education. Since teachers were in charge of their own curriculum, and their independently created gradebook was the gauge for how well a student was doing in a given course, there was a chance that, if Teacher A put more work into designing their curriculum and aligning it with state standards than Teacher B, students in Teacher A's class would, in turn, be held to a higher standard and receive a more accurate grade than those in Teacher B's. Essentially, those students in teacher B's class would be receiving an inferior education, despite attending the same institution. It was important to administration to equip all teachers with the skills to be like teacher A.

Many of my school's teachers were apprehensive about completely reinventing their grading methods, and some seemed angered by the idea that their grading style was unfair. I, however, was committed to pleasing my bosses and starting my career off on the right foot, so I decided that I would fully explore standards-based grading. I joined the district's standards-based grading committee, and as a group, we spent much of our professional development time studying standards-based grading and convincing our colleagues of its merits.

Our administration wanted the implementation of a standards-based grading policy to be successful, abandoning the process was not an option, so our committee was tasked with designing a grading system and sample gradebook that would demonstrate to teachers the differences between existing grading policies and a new, standards-based policy. We worked diligently, and by the end of the year, everyone on the committee felt very well-versed in the concepts of standards-based grading, but we did not ultimately receive the response from staff we were hoping for. The implementation process felt disjointed, and many of the teachers we spoke to said they felt left out of the conversation entirely. The following year, I moved to another school in rural Minnesota, and I lost track of how the implementation of standards-based grading worked out for my former colleagues. I hoped that the work we started continued, and standards-based grading didn't end up as just another educational flash in the pan, but when I left it felt as though the way in which the new grading policy was introduced to staff had done significant damage to the implementation process.

Why Care about the Introduction of Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading appeals to my desire to properly and efficiently assess my students. I do not want the concept to go away. However, in order for it to be a viable alternative to existing grading policies, work needs to be done to determine the effective means of its introduction to staff. In this study, my aim, keeping in mind the issues that have slowed others' efforts to promote standards-based-grading, is to detail possible guidelines for introducing an effective standards-based grading policy to instructional staff, so the switch to a better grading policy is seen as a positive thing and not an arduous task in which the work outweighs the benefits.

Teachers, through their experience and education, have the opportunity to become highly-skilled in all areas of curriculum design and assessment. When it comes to creating courses and designing gradebooks, it is not a stretch to think that a licensed, practicing teacher is the best candidate for the job. This is why standards-based grading caused some of my colleagues to get upset. Many teachers seemed apprehensive about standards-based grading because it felt like someone who was not a part of their classroom was telling them what was best for their students. However, in the course of my studying, I learned that standards-based grading is not a concept which seeks to take power away from a teacher or suggest that a teacher does not know what is best for their students. Rather, it should be a way to help teachers collaborate to standardize the assessments that prove to the school a student has learned what they are meant to learn.

According to one of its strongest proponents, Thomas R. Guskey, standards-based grading is a good tool not only for grading students, but also for proving that a teacher's work is relevant (Guskey & Jung, 2009). Based on that, the goal of this capstone is to find ways to introduce standards-based grading which will help instructional staff approach the concept with an innovative and collaborative mind, resist the urge to become defensive in the face of change, and create cohesion throughout their program.

Issues with Non-Standards Based Grading Policies

When a variety of teachers create a variety of assessments and set a variety of expectations, things can start to look very different between a school's classrooms. Different does not always mean bad, but it can muddle the specific goals that a school has for its students. As a new teacher, I relied on experienced teachers to help me design my curriculum and

assessments, and although I have received many valuable strategies over the years, I have seen very little cohesion in the way students are assessed from teacher to teacher. Some teachers obsess over perfect grammar and formatting, while others place a higher priority on the quality of students' ideas. Some teachers require extensive papers as summative assessments while others administer tests and quizzes. As a result of these different expectations, I recognize that there are times when students seem confused about what is important to learn in a given class. I have, at times, heard that the way I grade is different from other teachers my students have had in the past. I know I am addressing state standards and using quality writing rubrics and tests, but because of these perceived differences between my grading and that of other instructors, I find myself wondering if the ways I am assessing my students are accurate and relevant, or if they are simply based on the personal preferences of myself and the instructors who have influenced me. A switch to a standardized method of grading, agreed upon by all involved parties, for all of the teachers in my building, could help my colleagues and I become more confident in our grading policies.

Teachers, departments, schools, and districts should all be in agreement on what a student should be able to do to move on to the next grade-level. It is unfair to the student body to have varied expectations. Even if standards-based grading is not the answer, there needs to be a serious discourse amongst educators on how to make grading more accurate and meaningful. I would like to add to that discussion with this capstone.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research will be to answer the question, "How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?" Ideally, educators should feel a

sense of connection to the innovations in their field. It is understandable, however, that teachers might be skeptical about what they are being asked to do if it appears to be a great interruption or addition to their work. Standards-based grading represents a change in grading philosophy and practice for many teachers, so if it is presented as something that is not relevant to their work or may only impact them for a little while, they may be wary of putting too much effort into making it work. The research shared in this capstone will help schools introduce standards-based grading to staff in a way that will address potential roadblocks and encourage collaboration to keep the implementation process moving forward. The information in this capstone should help educators take the ideas behind standards-based grading seriously and make them relevant to their work.

A teacher cannot simply get exposed to the basics of standards-based grading and then be expected to fully commit to its implementation. A staff's introduction to standards-based grading needs to be innovative and collaborative. The implementation process needs to be made relevant and clear. If a staff feels confident that their work in learning to use standards-based grading is going to be useful for years to come, there will be a greater effort put into getting the results administrators want. I recognize a need to have better, more uniform ways of assessing our students, and I would like for this capstone to demonstrate to teachers that standards-based grading is at least worth their thoughtful consideration.

Standards-based grading has the potential to assist me and my colleagues in making our grades more relevant, our curriculum more accessible, our communication with parents more open, and our collaboration more meaningful. I hope to, one day, see conversations on grading policy move past the "good ideas" phase because I believe better grading policies could help bring about positive changes in the way students are assessed. In this capstone, I will identify effective procedures and materials for introducing a standards-based grading policy to educators.

Role of the Researcher

Currently, I am a Language Arts instructor at an alternative, PSEO-based high school program. My program is unique in that it is housed in a technical college's campus and seeks to get students back into high school and start working toward their college degrees at the same time. The case-study that was completed to support this research was conducted at this site. Introducing standards-based grading to teachers in an alternative school like mine seems particularly relevant because our students expect their grades to be a reflection of their abilities and not their personalities or circumstances. I have witnessed students in my program struggle to complete daily work and manage their behavior, not due to their inability to learn the standards, but, in my opinion, due to the circumstances of their health and personal lives. In order to keep students engaged and in school, I have to make sure that I am grading them in a way that is easy to understand. Basing their grades on my own personal standards of work ethic and behavior is unfair to these students. I believe standards-based grading could be a better way for myself and the other instructors in my program to assess our students on their skills and not their attitudes and personalities.

Guiding Research Question

There is a wealth of information and opinion when it comes to introducing standards-based grading to instructional staff. In this research, I have aimed to use that information as well as my case-study to answer the question, "How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?"

Summary

The preceding chapter discussed the concept of standards-based grading and the reasons for its implementation in schools and addressed the idea that some of the revolutionary ideas involved in standards-based grading have caused its implementation and introduction to teachers to be unsuccessful in some situations. As an educator, it is my belief that finding the best ways to introduce a standards-based grading policy might not only improve the way teachers grade, but also improve the quality and relevancy of a school's ability to innovate instruction and assessment in general.

This capstone will research standards-based grading policies and the expected results of their implementation to create educational literature and sample benchmarks for instructional staff and include a case study in which standards based grading is introduced to a group of instructional staff. Reading this capstone will be meaningful to educators who want to increase their knowledge of standards-based grading and create a collaborative and transparent method for introducing the concepts to their peers.

Chapter Overview

In this Introduction, I have addressed the importance of the capstone as well as my background as a teacher and role in my current program. Chapter Two will review literature on topics relevant to standards-based grading to answer the following question, "How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?"

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this capstone is to assist educators with the introduction of standards-based grading concepts and policies to instructional staff members. Standards-based grading is touted as an effective way to get educators to “design and interpret assessments and use those assessments to develop meaningful grades” (Marzano, 2009, p. 2). The literature reviewed for this study relates directly to the introduction of standards-based grading to instructional staff and seeks to answer the question, “How can instructional staff be properly introduced to a standards-based grading policy?” The information in this study should be of value to anyone responsible for assessing students’ mastery of state learning targets.

Before learning about the best ways to introduce standards-based grading, it is important to understand exactly what the term means and how it can look in practice. Once an educator has a basic understanding of what standards-based grading is, they will be able to articulate its principles to their peers (Popham, 1997). The concepts of standards-based grading discussed in this chapter and the literature created to address them were formulated through the analysis of a collection of literature written by educators, school districts, researchers, and media outlets. The literature studied has been broken down into important topics relative to the introduction of standards-based grading; important vocabulary, issues with standards-referenced policies, potential issues with the introduction of standards-based grading, identified strengths of standards-based grading, and documented success of the introduction to staff of standards-based grading policies.

Important Vocabulary

Instructional Staff

According to US Legal, instructional staff “includes principals, teachers, supervisors of instruction, librarians, library school media specialists...and other individuals who have responsibility for assisting [students] to learn.” (2016). This definition was used in the selection of the participants used for the case-study described in chapters 3-5.

Standards-Based Grading

Robert J. Marzano has published some of the most definitive literature on standards-based grading in his books, *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading* and *Transforming Classroom Grading*. According to Marzano, standards-based grading is “Grading that references student achievement to specific topics within each subject area” (2000, p. 17). This definition suggests that a big part of an educator’s understanding of standards-based grading hinges on a knowledge of the agreed upon areas of learning within their subject area. Figure 2.1, from *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading*, supplies examples of some of the common measurement topics for which student achieved is referenced in language arts.

2.1: Examples of Common Measurement Topics in Language Arts

Reading	Writing	Listening and Speaking
Word recognition and vocabulary	Spelling	Listening comprehension
Reading comprehension	Language Mechanics and conventions	Analysis and evaluation of oral media
Literary analysis	Research and technology	Speaking applications
	Evaluation and revision	

(p. 18)

Once the reference topics for a subject area are identified and agreed upon, the implementation of standards-based grading involves creating summative assessments for each course that offer students a score of advanced (4), proficient (3), basic (2), or below basic (0-1) for each measurement topic. Receiving a score of proficient or higher results in a student's advancement to the next level of instruction, and demonstrates that instructor intervention is not needed (Marzano, 2009, p. 18). When switching to standards-based grading, work also needs to be done to create relevant formative assessments which prepare students for the summative assessments in a course (p. 19).

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are all of the assessment tools a teacher uses to record and measure student success (Marzano, 2009, p. 8). In general terms, formative assessment can be described as the daily work and quizzes that prepare a student for a final exam or project. Formative assessments should guide the next steps in instruction (Guskey & Jung, 2009).

Traditionally, formative assessment has been used as a means to more frequently assess students' abilities than only grading a few, large summative assessments. In many non-standards-based gradebooks, the scores on formative assessments are added up in conjunction with scores on summative assessments and averaged to contribute to a student's overall grade on a scale of 1-100 (Stiggins, 2005). In standards-based grading formative assessments are used more as a barometer for identifying how students are progressing towards readiness for a summative assessment and do not contribute greatly to a student's final grade (Stiggins, 2005).

In traditional grading systems, formative assessments can potentially be seen as somewhat subjective in that they may not have the organized, progressive structure needed to

prepare students for summative assessments. If formative assessments are included in an overall grade, they have the potential to help or hurt a student in terms of GPA but not necessarily in terms of readiness for the next level. A standards-based grading policy seeks to formalize formative assessment, so that it is planned according to the exact standards assessed on a summative assessment. Formative assessment, in standards-based grading, actively prepares students for summative assessments by monitoring progress on formative assessments and adjusting instruction accordingly (William, 2006, p. 284). Even though it is not necessary to include formative assessments in a student's final grade, they are equally as important to a student's mastery of learning standards.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are the tools an instructor uses to measure student development over the course of a term (Marzano, 2009, p. 8). Summative assessment can be described as the major exams and projects that students complete to demonstrate their level of mastery in a specific course (p. 9). In standards-based grading these are the assessments that need to be passed in order for a student to progress to the next level of study (p. 9-10).

Under traditional grading policies, summative assessments may be worth more points than formative assessments, but when formative assessments are included in a student's class average and occur in a higher volume, they don't have the impact on final grades they should (Guskey, 2006). Potentially, a student could fail all of the major summative assessments in a course but still have earned enough credit, through daily work, attendance, etc., to pass the class. This is why standards-based grading requires that a department create agreed upon, standards-

aligned summative assessments that become the basis for the curriculum of a given course and the rationale for passing or failing a student (Guskey, 2008 p. 2).

Summative assessments can be more than major exams. The term applies to any assessment that judges a student's understanding of the agreed upon standards for a course. Summative assessments can be exams, projects, speeches, labs, or any other means of grading a student's mastery (O'Connor, & Wormeli, 2011).

Innovation

According to Everett Rogers, innovation is a term that describes a new, sometimes revolutionary idea within a particular field (2003, p. 12). Standards-based grading is an innovation in the field of education, so when talking about introducing it to educators, it is prudent to address it as such (p. 13). The process of introducing standards-based grading to teachers, in this essay, will be guided by Rogers' theory of the diffusion of innovation as described in his book, *The Diffusion of Innovation* (2003).

The success of standards-based grading as an innovation depends on teachers' positive perceptions, the communication channels used to diffuse the innovation to staff, the time it takes to communicate the ideas, and the social system in place to promote them (p. 150). According to Rogers, standards-based grading, as an innovation, needs to be accepted by as many early adopters (in this case, instructional staff who believe in its concepts and are willing to give it a try) as possible. In order to achieve this, an innovator needs to clearly demonstrate the usefulness of standards-based grading and the benefits of becoming an early adopter (p. 23).

Issues with Standards-Referenced Grading

Lack of Innovation

Innovation is an essential part of any career field. As society evolves, each industry must react to the needs and issues of its clientele (Rogers, 2003 p. xvi). Education is no different. Schools must never stagnate and should always seek to find the best methods for instructing and grading their students (p. 35). The ability of a school to innovate its practice furthers the education and skill of its staff and promotes a healthy, honest, and collaborative culture throughout an entire building (Barlow, Frick, Barker, & Phelps, 2014, p. 18).

Subjective, teacher-based grading policies have a secluding effect on teachers. Grading is paramount to effective instruction and should be subject to regular innovation. Allowing teachers to be solely responsible for their grading policies keeps the innovation of assessment from diffusing across school, essentially stopping the process of innovation entirely (Reeves, 2006 p. 88).

The 100-Point Scale

The implementation of standards-based grading typically involves a change from a teacher-based policy. Teacher-based grading systems are, rather than based-on, in reference to standards and commonly rely on a 100-point scale to communicate a student's grade (Marzano, 2009, p. 39). When grading using a 100-point scale, educators track student performance by scoring formative and summative assessments over time and use the average of those scores to generate final grades. In order for a teacher-driven, 100-point scale to be effective, the assignment of points per assessment must be flawless, otherwise a student's scores and progression are based on an individual teacher's math and point division instead of what has

actually been learned (p. 40). A sensible introduction to standards-based grading would include conversations around what is potentially flawed with current, 100-point systems.

Existing, non-standards-based grading is subjective and doesn't require collaboration to be produced. Departments do not have agreement on what should be assessed and how it should be assessed. Under this style of grading, students run the risk of being assessed only on how an individual teacher feels they did and not on how much they actually learned (p. 42).

Despite an individual teacher's education and qualifications, research suggests that educational policy benefits from staff collaboration and agreement on classroom procedures (p.42). Just as there is an infinite amount of diversity among students, that same diversity can be found among teachers. Differences should be celebrated, but they should not result in subjective instruction and disjointed communication of expectations as can happen in a teacher-based policy (Marzano, 2009 p. 41).

Marzano demonstrates the disparity that can occur between teachers' 100-point scales through the following exercise. Teachers were asked to assign 100 points for a course between three units of study. Unit A had ten factual multiple choice questions, Unit B asked students to write four short responses to explain principles and generalizations, and Unit C asked students to write two short responses that drew inferences and demonstrated applications beyond what was taught in class (p. 43).

Once a teacher divided the 100 points between these sections, based on their own value system, a hypothetical student's scores on each unit was presented: The hypothetical student answered all of Unit A correctly, two of the questions in Unit B correctly, and none of the questions in Unit C correctly (p. 40). Chart 2.2 illustrates just how different the student's average was depending on how a particular teacher distributed their 100 points.

2.2: Subjectivity in the Distribution of Points

	Points Assigned Section A	Points Assigned Section B	Points Assigned Section C	Total Points for [hypothetical] Student
Teacher 1	40	40	20	60
Teacher 2	20	40	40	40
Teacher 3	60	20	20	70
Teacher 4	70	20	10	80
Teacher 5	20	20	60	30

(Marzano, 2009, p. 41)

According to the chart, the student would have earned a B in Teacher 4's class, but would have earned an F in both Teacher 2 and Teacher 5's classes. This illustrates the subjectivity of 100 point grading policies. None of these teachers was doing anything wrong under their current policies, so the experiment proves that one teacher should not be deciding what is valued in their department. In order to set clear expectations for student success, all teachers need to be in agreement on what to assess and how to assess it (p. 42).

Including Factors other than Academic Performance

Turning young people into functioning members of society necessitates a wide variety of activities and lessons that extend beyond state learning targets. In addition to facilitating the mastery of academic subjects, Schools can be places for students to learn how to behave properly and conduct themselves in a professional manner (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 5). If there is no focus on anything other than intellectual pursuits, schools run the risk of producing a one-dimensional, ill-behaved workforce for future generations (p. 6). This is why many teachers include a student's work-ethic and behavior in their grading policies (p. 8). However, allowing non-academic factors

to weigh on a student's grade, as standards-referenced, teacher-based grading allows, can cause a student's personality to outweigh their abilities (p. 8).

In *Transforming Classroom Grading*, Robert Marzano identifies four “nonachievement” factors that many teachers consider when administering grades (2000, p. 4). They are effort, behavior, cooperation, and attendance. Just as the 100-point scale varies from teacher to teacher, the inclusion of nonachievement factors is also subjective, and an inaccurate measure of student learning (p. 3). Figure 2.3, taken from *Transforming Classroom Grading*, is a table that shows a “percentage of teachers reporting use of effort, behavior, cooperation, and attendance in determining grades” (p. 4). This table illustrates inconsistencies in the inclusion of non-academic factors in student grades and further demonstrates the subjectivity of teacher-driven grading policies.

2.3: Inclusion of Nonachievement Factors

Grade Level	Effort	Behavior	Cooperation	Attendance
K [71 teachers polled]	31%	7%	4%	8%
1-3 [110 teachers polled]	29%	8%	4%	8%
4-6 [158 teachers polled]	30%	8%	8%	10%
7-9 [142 teachers polled]	36%	10%	8%	18%
10-12 [151 teachers polled]	36%	14%	9%	24%

(Marzano, 2000, p. 4)

From a statistical standpoint, this table suggests that teacher-based grading policies can produce varying results, and in turn have the potential to be inaccurate (Marzano, 2000, p. 9).

The variations in the inclusion of non-academic factors in gradebooks seen in Fig 2.3 suggest there is a need for collaboration and professional development to reach an understanding of what should be considered when determining grades. If an agreement can be reached on how

students should be graded, students benefit from not passing or failing a class based on the subjectivity of the teacher they are assigned (Schmoker, & Marzano, n.d.).

Potential Issues with the Introduction of Standards-Based Grading

A Significant Change in Practice

Transitioning to a standards-based grading policy, for many teachers, requires a significant shift in philosophy and practice (Reeves, 2014). If a school does not take the appropriate steps to help its staff adjust, standards-based grading can create discord (Reeves, 2014). Some schools that have switched, or attempted to switch, to a standards-based grading policy have been met with teachers who feel overburdened by and underprepared for the change (Guskey, 2008, p. 3). Just as it is prudent, when introducing standards-based grading to instructional staff, to have discussions on how current grading policies can be improved, it is also important to discuss the potential issues that can arise during the implementation process.

One of the biggest challenges of introducing standards-based grading is simply that change in education is extremely difficult, especially when it concerns grading (Guskey, 2008 p. 3). Thomas R. Guskey had this to say in his book, *Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards-Based Grading*:

Of all aspects of our education system, none seems more impervious to change than grading and reporting. Despite numerous calls for reform based on our knowledge of what works and what does not work in grading, the policies and practices used in most schools today have remained largely unchanged for decades. We persist in using these antiquated practices not because they have proven effective, but because they are steeped in long-held

traditions. When asked about the rationale behind these policies and practices, the typical response is simply, ‘We’ve always done it that way’ (p. 2).

For educators interested in improving their school’s grading practices through standards-based methods, the biggest hurdle can be staff members who simply do not want to change (Guskey, 2011, p. 21). The institutional change of a teacher’s grading policy requires significant amounts of professional development, work time, pressure from administration and parents, and accounting for differentiation (Guskey, 2008, p. 6). This process can seem daunting to even the most open-minded educator (Bay, Reys, & Reys, 1999).

Standards-based Grading and Students with Exceptionalities

“Exceptionality” is a word the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development uses to, “identify patterns of strengths and needs common to groups of students.” (*Early Childhood Development Exceptionalities*). Grading students with exceptionalities is a complicated issue (Guskey, 2008 p. 29). Students with special circumstances are often required, through individualized education plans, to receive additional support from classroom teachers (p. 30). As a result, many teachers evaluate students with exceptionalities using, at least partially, “informal, individual grading adaptations” (Guskey, Jung, 2009, p. 55). According to Guskey, these adaptations, while well-intended, do not necessarily result in an honest, accurate measurement of a student’s academic abilities (Guskey, 2008, p. 30). What is often given to students with exceptionalities are grades for their personalities or the overcoming of challenges and not their meeting of state requirements. This practice of informally assessing students for their effort and participation encourages students with exceptionalities to increase their work ethic, but it does not increase efficacy (p. 31). Under traditional grading systems, it can seem as

though students with exceptionalities get shuffled through the system as long as they participate to the best of their ability (p. 38).

Making adaptations and exceptions for students with exceptionalities is not done out of laziness or a lack of innovation, rather it is done out of compassion for the student and respect for the processes and legalities of educational law. If an exceptional student fails an assessment, it does not merely show that the student has not learned what they were intended to, it also shows that their IEP or 504 plan is not working and work needs to be done to find new interventions (Guskey, Jung, 2009, p. 55-56). Standards-based grading requires a more honest assessment of the abilities of exceptional students, and that can be very difficult when grades for all students, exceptional or not, are based on the same standards (p. 56).

Implementing a standards-based grading policy holds promise for accurately assessing students with exceptionalities, but, if the introduction process is not handled delicately, assessing students with special needs can seem more challenging than doing so under traditional, subjective methods (Guskey, Jung, 2009 p. 55-56). The challenge of using standards-based grading to assess students with special needs can best be summed up by the following selection from Thomas Guskey and Lee Ann Jung's 2009 article, *Grading and Reporting in a Standards-Based Environment: Implications for Students with Special Needs*:

When teachers assign grades on the basis of specific learning standards, the meaning of a grade changes from an overall assessment of learning (e.g., How did this student perform in language arts?) to a description of students' performance on a discrete set of skills (e.g., How well did the student master the ability to identify the plot, setting, and characters in reading passages?). This shift in focus to assigning grades based on precise levels of

performance with regard to articulated learning standards makes the task of grading students with exceptionalities much more challenging (55).

Standards-Based Grading and English Language Learners

To avoid redundancy, let it be implied that many of the challenges that face educators in teaching and assessing students with exceptionalities can also be applied to teaching students who are English language learners. The difference is that communicating the meaning of a grade to a student or parent whose first language is not English can be much more difficult than doing so to a parent who is fluent in English. A component of standards-based grading is the effective communication of a student's progress through the feedback inherent in the scores (0-4) students receive on assessments. Considering English language learners in this communication can prove quite difficult and has the potential to frustrate teachers (Guskey, 2008).

Language-diversity is a reality for urban and rural schools alike. The number of non-native English speakers joining American classrooms has been on a steady incline for years, so to leave that section of our schools' populations out of the conversation on standards-based grading is ill-advised (p. 12). Assessing English language learners using standards-based grading is something of a recent addition to the literature and resources on the topic, and it has been determined to be an important topic to cover thoroughly with a staff before implementation begins (p. 14).

Many summative assessments are designed with mainstream, English speaking students in mind. Administering this type of high-stakes assessment to a non-native English speaking student with the same expectations as those for whom English is their first language appears unfair. An English language learner may be able to demonstrate their mastery of standards in

their first language, but in order to do so in an English-speaking classroom, they need to master their new language first, so, if the purpose of standards-based grading is to accurately measure a student's meeting of state or common core standards, than it seems unfair for instructors to fail a student based solely on their understanding of the English language (Abedi, Levine, p. 26).

Assessing English language learners and students with exceptionalities is an issue that causes many educators to see standards-based grading as a novel idea, but one that doesn't take into consideration all of the variables modern schools need to address (Reeves, 2014).

Agreement between Standards-Based Progress Reports and State Tests

Each year, students are administered a variety of state standardized tests. These assessments are not created or graded by classroom teachers. Rather, they are designed by third parties and graded by education department officials or a hired company to assess students on their skills in an effort to monitor statewide progress in specific subjects (Figueroa, 2013). The concepts covered in most standardized tests stand in contrast to the philosophy of standards-based grading because, "[Standards-based progress reports]...report performance on specific skills rather than broad content areas" (Guskey, 2008, p. 77). Although they have similar titles, standards-based grading and standardized testing are very different in nature. Standards-based grading assesses students' mastery of learning targets specific to a particular course, while standardized testing assesses students' mastery of broad content areas (Hardegree, p. 3). Under standards-based grading, educators need to make sure that their students master very specific skills which might not necessarily prepare them for state tests. When introducing educators to standards-based grading it is important to discuss the role standardized testing will play in instructional design (Guskey, 2008, p. 98).

One of the promises of standards-based grading is that it will more accurately assess students' skills, but schools and teachers have noted that, at times, their students' scores on standards-based progress reports (SBPRs) are not in agreement with their scores on state, standardized tests (Guskey, 2008, p. 76). A parent might look at a student's standards-based report card in comparison to their state test scores and say, "How can my student be getting passing marks on his geometry assessments, he does really well in math class, but he is not passing the Math portion on the GRAD test?" The reason for the disparity is usually because the student is learning individual skills in geometry and making adequate progress in the class, but does not necessarily have a grasp on the entire math content area. While this disagreement between grades and test scores is not unique to standards-based grading, it is a little more pronounced because of the contrasting nature of the two styles of assessment (p. 77).

Identified Strengths of Standards-Based Grading

A healthier school community

Douglas Reeves, a leader in standards-based reform, in his article, *Leading to change/Preventing 1000 failures*, suggests that the successful introduction of new assessment practices to teachers can lead to, "hundreds of students who are more likely to be motivated and engaged instead of angry, disengaged, and discouraged...and an opportunity [for students] to learn that persisting, listening to teacher feedback, and working hard do make a difference" (2006, p. 88). Like many experts in the field, Reeves is passionate that sweeping changes need to be made to student assessment. Many schools are switching to standards-based grading, and it is important for teachers to understand the potential benefits of concept.

Standards-based grading is a way for teachers to better assess students and bring the school together for a common purpose (Reeves, 2004, p. 325). The implementation of standards-based grading goes beyond the latest trends in education and provides valuable curriculum and instruction practices that can be utilized throughout a teacher's career and will not be replaced by the "next big thing in education" (Van Den Bergh, Ross, & Beijaard, 2015, p. 145). The applicability of standards-based grading is far-reaching, and as such, the introduction of standards-based grading concepts is a way to create a more community-driven institution through the discovery of better and lasting assessment practices (Schmoker, & Marzano, 1999).

A collective Focus on Standards

A look through the state standards in any discipline reveals that the language used is often lengthy and open to multiple interpretations. The ambiguity of the standards can be a huge factor in the differences in assessment between individual, teacher-driven grading policies (La Marca, 2001). If it is possible to bend a standard to a teacher's own interpretation, then it makes sense that, throughout a department, one would see a variety of focus.

Standards-based grading asks departments to engage in thoughtful discussions on which standards are most important to the school and the best ways to assess the mastery of each standard. Under standards-based grading, teachers collaborate to create cohesive and progressive curriculum with one, harmonious voice (Spencer 2012, p. 9). One teacher's methods are not valued over another. Experienced and talented educators are given the opportunity to share their skills with their department, and emerging teachers are given an opportunity to bring fresh voices and opinions to the table (p. 10).

One of the tenets of standards-based grading is that expectations and standards are made clear to students. According to Kyle Spencer, “Standards-based grading derives from the idea that teachers ought to have clearly defined academic goals for their students, be able to determine if they've met them, and then communicate that to students and parents” (2012, p.5). This clarity in expectation can lead to a more knowledgeable student body and further open the lines of communication between families and staff.

Documented Success through the Implementation of Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading was developed in response to what many experts saw as a lack of accuracy and continuity in the way schools and teachers grade their students (Munoz, & Guskey, 2015, p. 66). The need for new and improved grading policies has led to the processes and gradebooks that are now associated with standards-based grading. Though some schools have had struggles during the implementation process, many schools have seen tremendous amounts of growth in student learning, teacher collaboration, and community improvement through their new standards-based grading policies and procedures (67). The following examples serve as inspiration for introducing a standards-based grading policy to teachers, and the experiences described make great talking for points for addressing the struggles that could potentially stand in the way of its successful implementation.

District 1

Research has shown that in order for the implementation of standards-based grading to be successful, a staff has to collectively recognize the benefits their school will experience. District 1 began looking into standards-based grading during the 2009-2010 school year. The district saw

a disparity in how students were performing between classes within the same subject areas and between performance in classes and performance on standardized tests assessment (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012). The district decided that their need for a new grading policy was so dire that they would have to be a bit hasty in the implementation process. Normally, it is recommended to spread the implementation of standards-based grading over at least three years, but District 1 wanted it done in two, and despite what some considered a rushed procedure, the district observed great success with their new policy (p. 32). Much of their success can be credited to the ways in which teachers were involved with the process from day one (p. 34).

In the beginning, and throughout the switch, the district faced the struggles typical of the initial phases of standards-based grading implementation. Teachers struggled with the philosophical shift to standards-based education (p. 30). Students' grades had historically been a great way for the district to motivate or punish students for their academic and personal performance in school. Under standards-based grading, they had to begin assessing students only on evidence of academic achievement. The change was difficult but resulted in instruction and curriculum that is more purposeful (p. 34).

Many teachers initially resented the idea of allowing students more than one opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of standard, which meant orchestrating retakes and accepting late work without consequences, but eventually staff saw, "the value of not punishing students for making mistakes while they [were] learning new skills" (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012).

The district used the quality curriculum they developed over the first year of implementation to create "common assessments and banks of vetted common assessment items" (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012). The district realized that one of the biggest issues

with the way grading had been done was that it was assumed that all teachers were completely assessment literate, meaning they were all able to create quality summative assessments without outside assistance. Through the implementation process, District 1 discovered that using district oversight to create and store assessments helped teachers plan their curriculum with a purpose. (p. 31).

District leaders realized that the concepts involved in standards-based grading can be confusing to outsiders, and in response, addressed a need for constant contact with instructors regarding the new policies and any concerns they might have. Standards-based grading became an opportunity to bring the school community together under the banner of better assessment. The promise of standards-based grading, based on District 1's experience, appears to lie not only in a more accurate grading system, but in concerted effort to better the school as a whole.

The number of B's and C's increased, and the A's [due to a decrease in the inflation of grades from extra-credit and nonacademic factors], D's, and F's decreased. A decrease in D's and F's was expected with the change in grading practices. Using the premises of standards-based education, such as not accepting work that is not at the quality desired, will increase the need for retakes, re-dos, and do-overs and move learning to deeper understanding resulting in more A's, B's, and C's (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westerberg, 2012, p. 34).

District 2

Schools in the second district studied for this research also felt a need to improve their methods of assessment and began introducing the concepts of standards-based grading to teachers during the 2011-2012 school year. District 2 faced a lot of opposition to their new

grading policy over the first two years of implementation, but upon adapting their policy to the needs and ideas of their staff, administration notes that the results of standards-based grading on its schools has been overwhelmingly positive (*Standards of Practice for grading and Reporting*).

According to the principal of one of District 2's high schools, the greatest success that came from standards-based grading can be seen in the way that teachers now, "understand when and how to perform interventions for their students" (2015). The principal notes that prior to the implementation of standards-based grading, it was apparent that teachers were grading more on memorization and subjective topics such as behavior, punctuality, and participation than on what was actually being learned. Teachers' curriculums were linear and did not allow for intervention or re-teaching, so many students were being left behind or forced to move on to lessons they were not ready for. Now, under standards-based grading, students in District 2 are receiving support and interventions where they are needed (2015).

District 2 faced a lot of controversy and dissent from teachers who initially felt they were not well prepared for the switch in grading policy, but the principal points out that none of the opposition to standards-based grading was noticeably different to that of any new school policy. Administration recognizes the need to adapt standards-based grading to the needs of his teaching staff and educate them accordingly. The district knew that at no point should they abandon the implementation process altogether because teachers were frustrated. In the principal's words, "Any shift in school policy requires staff to feel connected to its applications and relevancy. If [administration] can get teachers involved in the implementation process, [eventually] [a school] will get quality work and buy-in from everyone" (2015).

District 2 struggled through the first steps of the implementation process and discovered that the way standards-based grading had been introduced to its staff was in some ways faulty,

but it was through that struggle that the district found that allowing all the voices of the school community to be heard resulted in a better grading policy and a greater sense of community throughout the district (2015).

Conclusion

This section reviewed literature that discussed the basics of what standards-based grading is and what it can mean for a school. Also reviewed were the potential struggles associated with the implementation process and the difficulty of institutionalizing such a sweeping change. This section also reviewed literature that covered where and how the concepts of standards-based grading have been implemented in two districts to create better grading practices and a healthier school community. The research in this essay will analyze the literature studied in this review to create educational literature on the introduction of standards-based grading.

It has been noted that there are common issues with the introduction process. This research will seek to find ways to deal with these issues efficiently and/or avoid them altogether. Within the following pages, one will find a guide for discussing with teachers the creation of the policies and gradebooks associated with standards-based grading as well as ways to anticipate potential issues with the implementation process. This research should not be viewed as a step-by-step plan for introducing standards-based grading. Rather, it is a guide designed to help a school or individual introduce standards-based grading to their peers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

The purpose of this research is to determine the most effective methods for introducing a standards-based grading policy to classroom teachers. This study will analyze data collected during a case-study involving the introduction of standards-based grading concepts to a group of teachers. The findings will be compiled into a final schedule of procedures and suggestions for successfully introducing standards-based grading concepts to instructors.

Although standards-based reform has become more and more popular over the past twenty years, there are some issues that can prevent teachers from making the implementation process effective and efficient. Standards-based reform is touted as being a more honest, accurate, and communicable method of grading, but it has also been accused of being difficult to move from theory to practice. Interest in standards-based grading amongst educational pundits and school administration does not appear to be waning, so it is important for educators to have access to information on the principles and theories of standards-based grading as well as the best methods for learning those principles and the best ways to make them work in the classroom. This study will be a useful companion to any educator that is looking to introduce a standards-based grading policy to their staff in a way that anticipates and prevents struggle. (Guskey, 2011).

Research Plan

This study was conducted to answer the question, “How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?” A group of seven educational staff

members from an alternative, post-secondary option high school program participated in the initial instruction on a standards-based grading policy. A combination of information gathered from authoritative sources on the subject of standards-based grading as well as information from educators who have gone through the implementation process was used to design the literature and benchmarks that will be shown to participants to introduce them to the concepts of standards-based grading. This is what is considered a case study. The case study focused on a particular group of staff to determine the most effective methods for introducing instructors to standards-based grading, where to anticipate potential problems, and how to resolve and adapt a staff's introduction to a standards-based policy in a way that addresses potential complications. (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westenberg, 2012).

Setting

The program used in this case study, is a small, alternative high school housed on the campus of a community and technical college. The program serves students who have, for one reason or another, been away from a school setting for a prolonged period of time, students who have been unsuccessful in previous high school settings but are motivated to catch up and graduate, and students who simply want a smaller, more individualized program. The students represent a wide-range of skills, academic histories, credit needs, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The program has a total of seven staff members including a principal, a program director, a social worker, an administrative assistant, and four classroom teachers. Currently there are 76 students, 41 male and 35 female, enrolled in the program. The small nature of the program's staff and students will be ideal for a study of the introduction of standards-based grading because it

will give the participants in this case study a greater opportunity for their understanding, results, and concerns to be recorded accurately and taken into consideration (Quint, 2011).

The program is an ideal setting for this type of research, as its student body is made up of students with a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities; .5% of students are of Asian descent, .75% of students identify as Hispanic or Latino, 37% of students are African American, and 45% of students are white. 45% of students qualify for free or reduced school lunches (*2015-2016 High School Data Collection Form*).

One of the biggest complicating factors when implementing standards-based grading is creating effective assessment practices for students with exceptionalities and special needs (Nolet, & McLaughlin, 2005). Studying this group of instructors will provide input on standards-based assessment from instructors who work with students from all walks of life.

Participants

Program staff participated in the study over four weeks of the fall semester of 2015. The success of standards-based grading depends on the familiarization and input of all staff involved with its explanation and implementation, so classroom teachers were the focus of the literature provided, but administrators and support staff were also included in surveys. When the goal of a school is the eventual implementation of a building-wide standards-based grading policy, it is best to educate as many instructors and educational professionals as possible to avoid the need for re-teaching during consecutive years (Kyriakides, Charalambous, Creemers, Antoniou, & Demetriou, 2015).

The program is a part of an intermediate school district which, as of now, allows teachers to design their own gradebooks as long as syllabi are presented and approved and standards

alignment is demonstrated. Each participant was, for the most part, unfamiliar with the concepts of standards-based grading. Staff were educated and surveyed in regards to standards-based grading and looked to for valuable feedback on how such policies and concepts would best be introduced in a professional development setting and how standards-based grading may impact their classrooms, the school, and the district as a whole.

If a district wide standards-based grading policy were to be implemented in this program at some point in the future, it would be started in a similar fashion, a small group of teachers tasked with learning about standards-based grading policies asked to document their understandings and assist in the creation of guidelines and benchmarks for implementation (Proulx, Spencer-May, & Westenberg, 2012). This study aimed to follow that process as closely as possible.

Procedures

This study was conducted as if it were the initial stages of a pilot project for a school wide standards-based grading policy. The researcher acted as though he was tasked with studying standards-based grading, introducing it to his peers, and creating and introducing appropriate benchmarks for the implementation of a new policy. The design of the introduction procedures, educational literature, and hypothetical benchmarks is a hybrid of information learned from popular literature. The benchmarks were inspired by benchmarks used in the Osseo Area School District (2016).

The research began by sharing with staff the concepts of standards-based grading (Appendix B), as well as hypothetical benchmarks for its implementation (Appendix C). Staff were surveyed four times throughout their introduction to the concepts and benchmarks. The

initial communication also included a consent form which was signed by all participants (Appendix A). All parties involved with study needed to submit written consent to participate before their data could be used for analysis.

Data Collection

For this research, data was collected in the form of surveys. The surveys provided participants with an opportunity to give feedback on the methods of introduction and allowed the researcher to gauge the participants' levels of understand and satisfaction (Guskey, Jung, & Swan, 2011).

Educational literature was distributed to staff over a period of six weeks. Participants received literature on day one of the school week (not all weeks during the data collection period began on a Monday) and corresponding surveys on day three of the school week. Surveys needed to be completed by the first day of the following week, in time to receive the next piece of literature. Surveys and literature were distributed to staff via email as well as on paper. Participants will had a choice to complete the document using a word processor or by hand. Distributing and collecting these surveys via email or by hand made the collection process more suitable to the participant's preferences and allowed them to better fit their participation into a busy teaching schedule. It was important that responses to these surveys was thoughtful and honest, and making participation in them more convenient increased the probability of accurate analysis (Guskey, 2011).

Surveys

The surveys used to collect data for this capstone were developed to simplify and normalize the qualitative responses to literature on standards-based grading. Participants were asked to qualify their understanding of and satisfaction with the literature by rating how well the literature helped them understand the material through selecting variations of the choices “Very Well”, “Fairly Well”, or “Not Well Enough”. Participants were also asked to qualify the ease of understanding the procedures detailed in the literature by selecting variations of the choices “Very Easy”, “Somewhat Easy”, or “Not easy at all”. Overall impressions of the literature was collected by having participant select variations of the choices “Positive”, “Neutral” or “Negative”.

In an effort to also collect more specific qualitative data, participants were given the opportunity to explain why they selected a particular response and offer suggestions for the improvement of the literature. In addition, participants were asked to make marks and comments on the actual literature where they felt revision was necessary for understanding and satisfaction.

Initial Literature on Standards-Based Grading

To begin the study, initial literature introducing participants to the concepts of standards-based grading was distributed (Appendix B). The communication detailed the basics of standards-based grading and the ways in which they relate to formative assessment, summative assessment, grading scale, and feedback. Participants were also given a document which detailed the five hypothetical benchmarks for implementation (Appendix C). This first communication regarding standards-based grading was critical to the success of the study, as often times, it is a misunderstanding of the policy that leads to a lack of success in the introduction of standards-based policies (Guskey, 2006). The literature and benchmarks were created by synthesizing

information from multiple sources on the subject of standards-based grading. Along with the literature and benchmarks, participants received a survey (Appendix D) on their understanding and approval of the introduction of standards-based concepts and the associated benchmarks. The initial communication also included a consent form to be signed by all participants (Appendix A). All parties involved with the study needed to submit written consent to participate before their data could be used for analysis.

Benchmarks for Implementation

Research suggests that when introducing a standards-based grading policy it is best to establish and communicate the goals of the new policy through benchmarks (Erzen, 2014). Benchmarks provide a clear picture of what success will look like and how long it will take to complete the implementation process. After their initial introduction to standards-based grading concepts, participants were provided with a series of hypothetical benchmarks for the first semester of implementation (Appendix C).

The goal of supplying participants with these hypothetical benchmarks was to give instructional staff an idea of what their responsibilities might be if they are ever asked to begin implementing a standards-based grading policy (Svinicki, 1998). Based on their new knowledge of standards-based grading, staff were surveyed (Appendix D) for their approval and understanding of the proposed benchmarks. With this feedback, this capstone should help future implementation efforts by showing educators where benchmarks may be adapted and corrected based on the feedback collected in the survey. Analyzing feedback from participants provides insight on how to better introduce standards-based grading concepts to teachers.

Educational Literature on Benchmark #1 and Survey 2

After the initial communication on standards-based grading and the sharing of the benchmarks with participants, the information recorded from the coinciding surveys was documented and participants received a new document which discussed benchmark #1 in greater detail. Benchmark #1 indicates that, “Student academic grades will communicate academic achievement based on clearly-defined academic performance standards.” (Appendix E).

After participants had read through the literature on benchmark #1, they were asked to complete a second survey (Appendix F) in regards to their understandings, questions, concerns, and suggestions relating to the benchmark.

Educational Literature on Benchmarks #2 and Survey 3

The implementation of a standards-based grading policy involves the shift from subjective, teacher driven assessments and grades to standards-based, school driven assessments and grades (Guskey, 2009). A teacher’s introduction to this concept and the processes for creating such assessments is paramount to the success of standards-based grading as a whole. The purpose of benchmark #2 is to make sure that teachers separate non-academic achievement from academic achievement. The educational literature on benchmark #2 (Appendix G) detailed to participants the ways in which they can ensure that their final grades reflect only academic achievement.

After participants had read through the literature on benchmark #2, they were asked to complete a third survey in regards to their understandings, questions, concerns, and suggestions relating to the two benchmarks (Appendix H).

Educational Literature on Benchmark #3 and Survey 4

Standards-based grading requires a teacher's assessments to be closely aligned with the standards they are using for a class. This requirement may mean that teachers will have to work together to create quality assessments for each course within a department. Benchmark #3 asks that teachers use quality assessments to determine student grades. The educational literature on benchmark #3 explains, in-depth, the kinds of assessments that teachers can create to assess mastery of standards and includes an example of what a standards-based report card might look like (Appendix I).

After participants read through the literature on benchmark #2, they were asked to complete a fourth survey in regards to their understandings, questions, concerns, and suggestions relating to the two benchmarks (Appendix J).

Educational Literature on Benchmark #4 and Survey 5

One of the challenges in completing a successful introduction to the concepts of standards-based grading is making sure that instructors are aware of how to communicate feedback on student performance. (Marzano, 200, pg. 86). The Educational Literature on Benchmark #4 sought to educate participants on how to best prepare for providing students with easily understood feedback by supplying examples of the different types of rubrics that can be created and used for assessment under standards-based grading (Appendix K).

After participants read through the literature on benchmark #4, they were asked to complete a fifth survey in regards to their understandings, questions, concerns, and suggestions related to the two benchmarks (Appendix L).

Educational Literature on Benchmark #5 and Survey 6

The final benchmark used for this study deals with how to include a student in the processes of lesson planning and assessment. Under a standards-based grading policy, students are allowed multiple opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of a skill (Guskey, 2008, p. 20). In some cases this means that retakes and interventions must be available to students who do not pass an assessment. The educational literature on benchmark #5 details how a student can be involved in creating methods for assessing their understanding of a particular standard (Appendix M).

After participants read through the literature on benchmark #5, they were asked to complete a sixth and final survey in regards to their understandings, questions, concerns, and suggestions related to the two benchmarks (Appendix N).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this capstone is to determine the most effective methods for introducing instructional staff to the concepts of standards-based grading, so data was analyzed in terms of how effective the literature created for this study was at creating a sense of understanding amongst participants. Effectiveness was defined by the ratio of positive participant feedback to negative participant feedback on the surveys that accompanied the educational literature. If the majority of responses on a survey were positive in nature the document can be seen as an effective means for introducing standards-based grading. Negative responses and feedback were taken in to account and discussed as possible revisions for future versions of the documents.

Conclusion/Summary

The purpose of this section was to present the qualitative methodology for the research involved. The research involved developing educational literature and benchmarks for the first six weeks of instructional staff's introduction to standards-based grading. The rationale for the research was to answer the question, "How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to standards-based grading?" This research will be important to educational professionals, as it will assist in the introduction of the concepts of standards-based grading to instructional staff with less struggle than is sometimes experienced.

The study took place in a post-secondary option-based, alternative high school program. The program serves students in all high school grades. All seven of the faculty associated with the program participated in the study. The educational literature, developed through extensive research on standards-based grading, acted as the participants' introduction to the concepts of standards-based grading. At six points during the study, each participant provided feedback on their understanding and approval of the literature and benchmarks provided. The active participation of all involved parties helped establish effective methods for introducing the concepts of standards-based grading.

Data from participant surveys was analyzed to find where the educational literature and benchmarks effectively introduced the concepts of standards-based grading and where they may have caused confusion and/or misunderstanding. Feedback from participants was reviewed to identify whether the literature is an effective means for introducing standards-based grading and what educators might do to create revised literature and benchmarks that may increase efficacy.

The following chapters will detail the process of introduction to participants, the data collected, and the results of the analysis. The research was conducted in the style of a case study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY

In this chapter, I present the results of this study which examined the question, “How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?” Standards-based grading policies are becoming both increasingly popular and increasingly controversial. Through the review of literature on the subject, it can be determined that a major factor in the unsuccessful implementation of a standards-based grading policy is an improper introduction of the concept and expectations to instructional staff. This study was conducted in six phases. Phase one involved providing subjects with introductory literature on the basics of standards-based grading as well as five benchmarks that might coincide with the first semester of its implementation. Subjects were then asked to complete an anonymous survey on their satisfaction with the documents and given the opportunity to make notes on their copy of the document. Phases two-six involved providing subjects with literature detailing the expectations for benchmarks #1-#5. After having the opportunity to read each piece of literature, subjects were asked to complete corresponding surveys on each benchmark and make marks on the text where they saw specific need for clarity or improvement.

Phase One: Initial Literature and surveys on Standards-Based Grading and Potential Benchmarks

I began this phase by distributing a letter to my seven potential subjects stating my intentions to study teacher introductions to standards-based grading. The letter contained information on how I planned to protect their anonymity and mentioned each of the six phases of research. The seven subjects included six licensed teachers, including the principal, program

director, and four classroom teachers, and one paraprofessional. All seven potential subjects agreed to participate and completed a consent form (see Appendix A).

Subjects were then given initial literature on standards-based grading and a list of five potential benchmarks for the first semester of its implementation. Included with these documents was a survey meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the concepts and the way they were introduced. Subjects were given one school week (five days) to complete the surveys and return the literature. Completed surveys and feedback were received from all seven participants.

The results of the first survey on the initial literature and potential benchmarks are included in the tables below.

4.1: Survey 1, Question 1

Question 1: After reading these documents how well do you feel you understand the concepts of standards-based grading?	
A. Very well	5
B. Fairly well	2
C. Not well enough	0

4.2: Survey 1, Question 2

Comments from Question 2, "If you answered 'Fairly well' or 'Not well enough,' what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?"	
"Perhaps a case-study could be included to illustrate some of the essential aspects and/or common hurdles being overcome."	
"The initial definition of standards-based grading was a bit confusing. I think that mastery and a definition of mastery should have been provided in earlier in the introduction."	

Based on the responses to questions one and two it is clear that the document introduces the concepts of standards-based grading in a clear manner. However, based on the comments included on two surveys, some of the wording should be changed to make the definition of

standards-based grading more clear, and some instructors would benefit from seeing real-world examples of where standards-based grading is being used.

4.3: Survey 1, Question 3

Question 3: How easy is it to understand the grading scales and procedures used in standards-based grading?	
A. Very easy	5
B. Somewhat easy	2
C. Not easy at all	0

4.4: Survey 1, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”
“I think a better example of the scores for 0-4 could be found”
“I thought the grading scales were very well explained. I’m not sure what is meant by ‘procedures’. If they are the statements in the description of each grade that says what happens next, then they are clear. If the procedures involve more than that, I didn’t notice them.”
“Specific examples of a standard and what it would look like using intermediate scores.”

The document appears to introduce the grading scales effectively. Based on comments from question four, a revised version of this document should include specific examples of a graded assessment.

4.5: Survey 1, Question 5

Question 5: Of the struggles associated with implementing standards-based grading listed in the documents, which is the most concerning to you? Why?
“Retakes/multiple opportunities-time concerns. Teachers do not have time to be making/grading multiple versions of the same assessment. Many students won’t be available outside of class to do re-takes and re-takes will take away from class time.”
“Having students and teacher time setup to constantly have interventions and retakes of mastery material. Also, how would rubrics be designed by all staff at smaller schools where there may be only one teacher per content area?”

“Retakes/multiple opportunities”
“The time it would take to offer interventions and re-tests to students who don’t initially grasp the material.”
“Grading students with exceptionalities was most concerning to me as I don’t believe that it should be a struggle. Students with exceptionalities may require accommodations and/or modifications and those are in place to help them achieve the standards. These students may need an alternative assignment/assessment/project/instruction, but they are still capable of meeting the standards. Educators need to hold high standards for students with exceptionalities. We need to empower them and not enable them by maintaining high expectations. In the event that a student’s exceptionality would prevent them from reaching a standard, they have an IEP in place that allows them alternative ways of obtaining credits/addressing standards. (I would say the same thing for English learners, too, but was only allowed to pick the most concerning.”
“Retakes/multiple opportunities. In a school with large class sizes, the scheduling of retakes and additional instruction time will be challenging. I’m sure it can be done, but to do so would require, most likely, a team of educators committed to making standards-based grading successful. Otherwise, the challenge will be fuel for those who think it is not a practical system to use.”
“The time it takes to change the process.”

The biggest concern of teachers who are introduced to standards-based grading is the time it would take to alter their grading methods and allow for reassessments. A revised version of this document should include examples of how schools have allowed teachers enough time to make these changes to their grading systems.

4.6: Survey 1, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, based on the literature provided, what might be the best reason for switching to a standards-based grading policy?
“Guided support-Built into the policy is the contention that, when a student is unsuccessful, the responsibility is on the educators and their systems to figure out what the student needs to become successful.”
“Consistent grading/expectations across teachers.”
“Consistency across classrooms and teachers.”
“Meaning.”

“The general setup seems to give students an opportunity to try and master the material multiple times.”
“Students graded on mastery not behavior.”
“The best reason to switch to standards-based grading is to ensure that all students are meeting academic standards.”

Question six was asked to gauge what is most appealing to teachers about standards-based grading. When introducing teachers to standards-based grading, it appears that focusing the introduction on the ways in which standards-based grading encourages consistency, meaning, and guided support may create more excitement and willingness to adapt to a new policy.

4.7: Survey 1, Question 7

Question 7: Look at the literature and benchmarks I have provided. How easy is it to understand what is expected of teachers during the implementation process?	
A. Very easy	5
B. Somewhat easy	1
C. Not easy at all	1

4.8: Survey 1, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all’ what could be done to the document to make the expectations easier to understand?”	
“Somewhat easy”: “Nothing other than what was already mentioned. I answered somewhat easy because this concept is completely new to me and therefore I haven’t fully grasped it yet.”	
“Not easy at all”: “In our situation, we frequently adjust assignments to fit our students’ prior knowledge, as well as other circumstances. How would this fit?”	

One concern amongst my subjects is that teachers are often changing their curriculum in real time to fit students’ needs, but standards-based grading appears to require that a curriculum be designed prior to the start of a term. It appears prudent to include, in revised materials,

efficient means for using standards-based grading with curriculum that may need to be frequently changed.

4.9: Survey 1, Question 9

Question 9: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on standards-based grading and the corresponding benchmarks? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.
“It was an easy read. I would like to see an example of an assignment that was graded.”
“I would dedicate more space to convincing instructors that standards-based grading is even a good idea. I would like to be given examples of where it has been successfully implemented.”
“What might a standards-aligned summative test look like?”
“It would be beneficial to operationalize some of the words to create clear expectations.”
“I think a case study as an example, or an example or two put into the document would be helpful.”
“It may be beneficial for teachers if you define summative assessment and formative work. Some teachers may not know what these mean.”

Based on responses to question nine, teachers would very much like to see, from the beginning, examples of standards-based grading in practice. Also, operational words like “summative assessment” and “formative work” need to be clearly defined.

4.10: Survey 1, Question 10

Question 10: Have you ever been educated on or attempted to use standards-based grading in the past? If so, are these documents in-line with your previous understanding of standards-based grading? If not, what seems unclear, confusing, or arduous about these documents?	
Yes (4)	No (3)
“I would like more clarity on some of the words (operational definitions).”	
“The documents are in-line with my understanding of standards-based grading.”	

The document was in-line with the subjects' previous understanding of standards-based grading. However, it appears that greater care needs to be put into the operational words used when defining standards-based grading.

4.11: Survey 1, Question 11

Question 11: What is your overall impression of standards-based grading after reading these documents?	
A. Positive	1
B. Neutral	2
C. Negative	4

4.12: Survey 1, Question 12

Comments from Question 12, "If you selected 'neutral' or 'negative,' what could be done to these documents to make you change your answer to positive?"
"Explain in greater detail the efforts schools undertake to assure that standards-based grading works as equally effective for students with special needs, such as English Language Learners."
"I am not sure that you can change these documents to change my overall impression. I don't like that grading ELL students or students with exceptionalities [are seen as] potential struggles. I understand why they may be potential struggles, but I disagree with the rationale and don't think it should be a struggle. I also think it is important to somehow capture behavior and work completion. I like that if a student can demonstrate competency around a standard, his/her grade reflects that. I would also like to somehow capture behavior and work ethic, I don't know what that would look like."
"I'm not convinced that standards-based grading respects the time teachers would need to make all of these changes."
"Honestly not much. It appears that standards-based grading is really just standards-aligned testing given a new name. If the only assessment that truly matters is a test to prove mastery, then all other assessments fall by the wayside. Once students realize they can skip assignments and pass tests, which is all they will really focus on."
"In my situation, I am a department of one, so it would be difficult to collaborate. Our students' needs are extremely varied. Standards-based grading feels very sterile."

The results of questions 11 and 12 were somewhat shocking. The document effectively introduced standards-based grading, but did not convince the subjects that switching to standards-based grading would be effective or worthwhile. A revised document will need to be less sterile and include examples of how standards-based grading has addressed work ethic, students with special needs, and teachers' time in the past. It appears that introducing teachers to the concepts associated with standards-based grading needs to coincide with efforts to address relevancy and excitement around the switch.

Phase Two: Literature and Survey on Benchmark #1

Phase two began the following week and involved providing subjects with detailed literature on benchmark #1 of the implementation of standards-based grading. Included with these documents was a survey (see appendix F) meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the benchmark and the way it was introduced. Subjects were given five days to complete the surveys and return the literature.

Six of the seven participants completed and returned the survey. The results of the 2nd survey on benchmark #1 are included in the tables below.

4.13: Survey 2, Question 1

Question 1: Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #1.	
A. Very well	4
B. Fairly well	2
C. Not well enough	0

4.14: Survey 2, Question 2

Comments from Question 2, "If you answered 'Fairly well' or 'Not well enough,' what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?"
"I would like to know if the standards come from the state or if they are created by a teacher

committee. I am also unclear on the term ‘power standard.’”
“It’s not entirely clear who decides on the standards”

Based on the responses to questions one and two it is clear that the document introduces the concepts of standards-based grading in a clear manner. However, based on the comments included on two surveys, the literature needs to be revised to include clear guidelines on where a class’ standards are coming from and how they are decided upon.

4.14: Survey 2, Question 3

Question 3: How easy is it to understand the grading scales and procedures used in standards-based grading?	
A. Very easy	3
B. Somewhat easy	2
C. Not easy at all	1

4.15: Survey 2, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the document to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”
“The example is so broad that it may be an overarching framework. It does little to address what actual performance standards would look like. Schools can have such varied populations. Is it really possible to have standards that address the needs of each student? Are standards the same as benchmarks?”
“Is the assumption here that there is a set of standards the educators are to pick from? Or do they create their own? The part of Marzano’s common measurement topics suggests the educators create their own performance standards.”
“The table included seems vague. A more clearly defined example would be better.”

The document appears to introduce the grading scales effectively. The majority of responses were “very easy.” Based on comments from question four, a revised version of this document should include specific information on how standards are created. This information

may be different depending on the desire of a particular school. Some schools may want teachers to select standards from their state's list, and some may want their teachers to agree on their own version of the standards. The example of standards from a particular class should make this distinction clear.

4.16: Survey 2, Question 5

Question 5: Based on your experience as an educator, what struggles might an instructor encounter when attempting to reach benchmark #1?
"Time and a feeling of lack of control over their instruction"
"Agreeing on areas of learning and time to create and agree upon assessments and rubrics."
"Time to meet and identify the standards. In addition, instructors may not agree on standards for their content area."
"Some teams of instructors might have problems agreeing on performance standards, but then, that's basic group dynamics. Each group has to figure out how to agree on things."
"I would guess the number of rubrics that need to be created and revised would be daunting."
"Getting teachers to agree on topics and standards."

The biggest concern of teachers who are introduced to standards-based grading is the time it would take to create and agree upon the standards, assessments, and rubrics. A revised version of this document should include a guide for selecting standards and power standards and a timeline for department meetings that will decide which standards and rubrics will be used.

4.17: Survey 2, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #1 more clear?
"More specific examples of standards and the ways they are created."
"The chat from Marzano is more prominent than it should be. I feel like it should be less conspicuous."
"Nothing I can think of. It was pretty clear."

“It may be beneficial to add that teachers could refer to the standards identified by the state they work in.”
--

“Provide better examples.”

Based on these responses, a revised version of this document should replace the example chart with an example that better details how the standards were created and agreed upon. While the concept of the benchmark is easy to understand, there seems to be some confusion over the action steps necessary to reach it.

4.18: Survey 2, Question 7

Question 7: How relevant do you think benchmark #1 is to improving student success?	
A. Very Relevant	4
B. Relevant Enough	0
C. Not Relevant	1
Left Blank	1

4.19: Survey 2, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, “If you answered ‘Relevant enough’ or ‘Not relevant’ what could be done to the document for you to change your answer to ‘Very relevant’?”
“I’m yet to see evidence that standards-based grading will improve student success.”

While the majority of participants find benchmark #1 to be relevant to improving students success, two responses were concerning. One participant felt the benchmark was not relevant to improving students’ success because they had not seen evidence that standards-based grading, in general, improves students’ success over other forms of grading. Another participant left question 8 unanswered, which suggests that they were confused by how agreed upon standards might improve student success.

4.20: Survey 2, Question 9

Question 9: Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #1.	
A. Positive	3
B. Neutral	2
C. Negative	1

4.21: Survey 2, Question 10

Question 10: If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?
“More detailed information on how to create standards and a better example of what they look like”
“Honestly, it’s boring and dry (good luck with that) and lacks enough evidence to garner excitement.”

Based on responses to questions nine and 10, again, a revised document should be clearer on where standards come from and how time will be provided to agree on them. Also, based on the neutral and negative responses, it would be prudent to create a document that creates excitement around the idea of collaborating to create standards. If, as requested, the document provided more detailed information on the creation of standards and better examples of them, some of the dryer aspect of the document would be naturally eliminated.

4.22: Survey 2, Question 11

Question 11: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #1? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.
“It was clear and concise.”
“I would remove the ‘x’s’ in the chart. They are a little confusing as ‘x’s’ can imply many things. Instead, I’d leave the boxes blank.”
“It is unclear exactly what teachers need to produce to meet the benchmark.”

Based on responses to this phase of the research, distributing the document explaining benchmark #1 is an acceptable way to introduce the idea of using departmentally agreed upon standards to generate instruction and assessment. However, it will be prudent for a school to adapt the document to their own desire to either allow departments to create their own standards or use standards provided by their state's education department. It will also be a good idea to include examples of the ways in which using agreed upon standards in a specific course has helped other districts improve student success. Doing so will better generate excitement for reaching benchmark #1. Unfortunately, the literature reviewed for this capstone does not include quantitative evidence that shows improvement in student performance from a switch to standards-based grading.

Phase Three: Literature and Survey on Benchmark #2

Phase three involved providing subjects with detailed literature on benchmark #2 of the implementation of standards-based grading. Included with this document was a survey (see appendix J) meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the concepts and the way they were introduced. Subjects were given one school week (five days) to complete the surveys and return the literature. Six of the seven participants completed and returned the survey on benchmark #2. The results of the survey on benchmark #2 are included in the tables below.

4.23: Survey 3, Question 1

Question 1: Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #2.	
A. Very well	4
B. Fairly well	2
C. Not well enough	0

4.24: Survey 3, Question 2

Comments from Question 2: “If you answered ‘Fairly well’ or ‘Not well enough,’ what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?”	
“Nothing, it’s just a new topic, so I don’t feel like I understand everything yet.”	
“If there was an explanation/justification of why and/or how standards are weighted and who determines their weight, that would be helpful.”	

Based on the responses to questions one and two it is clear that the document introduces the concept of academic achievement outweighing non-academic behaviors well. However, based on the comments included on two surveys, the literature needs to be revised to include specific guidelines on how to properly weigh individual standards, both academic and non-academic. The example gradebook was helpful, but there was very little instruction on how to properly weigh grades. It would be beneficial for administration and department chairs to agree on grading scales for each subject and include those scales on a revised version of the document.

4.25: Survey 3, Question 3

Question 3: Please rate how easy is it is for you to understand the reasoning behind not, to a great extent, including non-academic factors in a student’s grade.	
A. Very easy	6
B. Somewhat easy	0
C. Not easy at all	0

4.26: Survey 3, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”	
There were no comments on any of the returned surveys.	

4.27: Survey 3, Question 5

Question 5: Based on your experience as an educator, what struggles might an instructor encounter when attempting to reach benchmark #2?
“Meeting the needs/goals of special needs students. The example gradebook feels overly complicated”
“I would imagine that removing effort from the calculation of a student’s grade could be challenging”
“The concept and rationale are easy to understand. I’m just not sure I agree with it. Grades will always vary from teacher to teacher, school to school, and/or state to state unless assessments are standardized and graded in some highly standardized way.”
“The first issue that I see is time. This standards-based way of grading would take an enormous amount of time. The second major issue would be that this method puts the emphasis on ‘high stakes’ testing. It leaves very little room for creativity or collaboration, and in fact, seems more like a model attuned to computer based, online instruction. I thought the point of education was to develop free and independent thinkers.”
“Non-academic behaviors sometimes play a role in academic achievement. As an educator, I still want a way to capture those non-academic behaviors, It does not need to be tied to grades though”

Based on responses to this question, the biggest concern surrounding the exclusion of non-academic behaviors from a student’s grade is a lack of subjectivity when determining grades. Participants are concerned that such a highly standardized way of grading would not only take a lot of time to perfect, it would also take away from creativity and subjectivity, especially when students with special needs are concerned. A revised version of this document should include a timeline and instructions for weighing standards and address the ways in which creativity and subjectivity can still be a part of a standards-based grading system.

4.28: Survey 3, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #2 more clear?
“See notes in document. I would like more information around weighing the standards”
“I feel that Marzano is using random statistical information to skew his point of view (table

2.2). This table throws out information on inconsistent ‘non-achievement’ factors yet is in no way correlated to a student’s final grade. I think that these small fluctuations flesh themselves out when considered in the overall grade. What I mean is that rarely is a student an A student in one class and a C student in another class due to inconsistent grading.”
“Nothing I can think of.”
“1. Fig 2.2-While I get that this table shows what % of teachers grade on the various non-academic factors shown, it may not be so clear to other readers. Maybe explain better right before the table.”

Based on these responses, a revised version of this document should have a more detailed explanation for Fig 2.2. For example, one participant brings up the idea that non-academic factors rarely influence a student’s grade enough to cause major discrepancies between one teacher’s and another’s final grades. This comment represents a philosophical difference of opinion from this participant and standards-based grading. If a program is committed to standards-based grading, concerns such as this will need to be addressed and accommodated at each stage of the implementation process.

4.29: Survey 3, Question 7

Question 7: How relevant do you think benchmark #2 is to improving student success?	
A. Very Relevant	3
B. Relevant Enough	1
C. Not Relevant	2

4.30: Survey 3, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, “If you answered ‘Relevant enough’ or ‘Not relevant’ what could be done to the document for you to change your answer to ‘Very relevant’?”
“I’m not sure.”
“I don’t believe that students are not successful as a result of non-academic behavior. Altering the document will not change my point of view.”

“I see the implementation of standards-based grading as too focused on just one aspect of learning. I can see struggling students more likely to drop out of school.”

While the majority of participants find benchmark #2 to be relevant to improving students success, three responses were concerning. Two participants appear to have philosophical disagreements with the idea of regulating how a student’s grade should be weighed. For any program attempting to switch to a standards-based method of grading, addressing these differences of opinion will be very important each step of the way.

4.31: Survey 3, Question 9

Question 9: Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #1.	
A. Positive	2
B. Neutral	2
C. Negative	1
Left Blank	1

4.32: Survey 3, Question 10

Question 10: If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”
“Not enough sources used.”
“Clarification on weighing standards (which may come later). It seems contradictory to say that grades should be standards-based and then say 20% can be non-academic behaviors. It would be clearer to just make them separate.”

In response to answers to questions nine and 10, a revised document would need to have more sources supporting the idea that separating non-academic behaviors from a student’s final grade is beneficial. A revised version of the document may also benefit from an explanation as to why any percentage of a student’s final grade should include non-academic behaviors.

4.33: Survey 4, Question 11

Question 11: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #2? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

“The document is currently only one sided. It has all of the ‘yay’ and none of the ‘boo’. That is to say, ‘what are the drawbacks and consequences of this approach?’”

“See questions six and ten.”

“Fig 2.2 seems inconsistent. Although our grading may be statistically different the results seem generally the same.”

This phase of the research suggests that distributing the document explaining benchmark #2 is an acceptable way to introduce the idea of, for the most part, keeping academic achievement separate from non-academic behaviors on a student’s final grade. However, it will be prudent for a school to adapt the document to address philosophical differences between its teachers and the foundations of standards-based grading. It will be important, at this phase in the implementation process, to attempt to accommodate teachers’ disagreements with the processes involved in standards-based grading. Based on feedback, it will also benefit a school to find or create specific examples of the grading scales they would like their teachers to use.

Phase Four: Literature and Survey on Benchmark #3

Phase four began the following week and involved providing subjects with detailed literature on benchmark #3 of the implementation of standards-based grading. Included with these documents was a survey (see appendix P) meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the concepts and the way they were introduced. Subjects were given one school week (five days) to complete the surveys and return the literature.

Six of the seven participants completed and returned the survey on benchmark #3. The results of the survey on benchmark #3 are included in the tables below.

4.34: Survey 4, Question 1

Question 1: Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #3.	
A. Very well	5
B. Fairly well	1
C. Not well enough	0

4.35: Survey 4, Question 2

Comments from Question 2: “If you answered ‘Fairly well’ or ‘Not well enough,’ what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?”
“I understand what the benchmark says, but it is arguable what is meant by ‘quality assessments.’ Who gets to decide what quality is.”

Based on the responses to questions one and two it is clear that the document introduces the work needed to create quality assessments and record evidence of achievement well. However, based on the comment included on one of the returned surveys, the literature needs to be revised to include a better definition of quality assessment and who within a program determines said quality.

4.36: Survey 4, Question 3

Question 3: Please rate how easy is it is for you to understand the creation and grading of assessments under a standards-based policy.	
A. Very easy	5
B. Somewhat easy	1
C. Not easy at all	0

4.37: Survey 4, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”

There were no comments on any of the returned surveys.

4.38: Survey 4, Question 5

Question 5: Based on your experience as an educator, what struggles might an instructor encounter when attempting to reach benchmark #3?

“Understanding the difference between summative and formative assessments. How to use data to guide their instruction, though this isn’t part of the benchmark. I have also experienced educators not knowing when to assess, developing quality assessments, and determining ‘how much is enough.’”

“It is unclear what is meant by quality. Further, types of assessments seen as ‘quality’ would change with every educational fad.”

“For a subject like math, I’d imagine trying to move towards using essays and oral reports as summative assessments would be challenging.”

“It doesn’t seem that these methods are any different than what we are currently doing. Multiple choice, written and oral reports, performance tasks, teacher observations, and student self-assessments are all already being employed in my classroom. This does nothing to address the current problems underlying a lack of student success; including attendance, participation, and a lack of money or materials for performance tasks.”

“Finding time to use formative and summative assessments.”

Responses to this question varied from each participant. One participant felt that the definition of summative and formative assessments and how they are used effectively could have been better explained. The word “quality”, which can be subjective in nature, troubled one of the participants. One participant noted that in a subject like math it can be very difficult to include essays and oral reports. Once again, it is evident that one participant felt that this benchmark and a switch to standards-based grading did not address the issues that they see as being more responsible for a lack of student success. Lastly, it appears that the time needed to create new curriculum and assessments is a major concern amongst educators.

4.39: Survey 4, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #3 more clear?	
	“I would like to see evidence and support from more sources.”
	“Compare and contrast how this is different from current practices. Marzano’s ideas include nothing new.”
	“This document explains the types of assessments but doesn’t explain much about what makes any type of assessment ‘quality’. More clarification on that could be helpful.”
	“See comments in document. I would recommend restructuring with subheadings for the different types of assessments and which assessments could fall under those subheadings.”

According to these responses, a revised version of this document should include more evidence and support from other sources. It might also be prudent, in addition to describing the different types of quality assessment, to explain the ways in which these types of assessments differ from assessments that are not of a high quality.

4.40: Survey 4, Question 7

Question 7: How relevant do you think benchmark #3 is to improving student success?	
A. Very Relevant	4
B. Relevant Enough	2
C. Not Relevant	0

4.41: Survey 4, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, “If you answered ‘Relevant enough’ or ‘Not relevant’ what could be done to the document for you to change your answer to ‘Very relevant’?”	
	“The teacher’s use of formative assessment to drive instruction improves student success. I feel that quality assessments and properly recorded evidence are a way to measure student success, I am not sure if it ‘improves’ student success. The wording of this question is why I ranked it as ‘relevant enough’.”
	“Again, it doesn’t focus on the true issues hampering student success: attendance, participation, effort, time, materials, and equipment.”

While the majority of participants find benchmark #3 to be relevant to improving students success, two responses were concerning. One participant felt that the question of relevancy to student success was not appropriate for the document. A revised version of the document might discuss specific ways in which quality assessments and accurate recording improve student success. The second response, once again, shows that some educators might not see standards-based grading as a way to address the larger problems facing schools. It appears that it will be important for any school attempting to implement standards-based grading to continuously provide evidence that standards-based grading does, in fact, make a positive impact in all areas of education and not only in the areas of assessment and grading.

4.42: Survey 4, Question 9

Question 9: Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #1.	
A. Positive	4
B. Neutral	2
C. Negative	0

4.43: Survey 4, Question 10

Question 10: If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”
“It was just a list of types of assessments most teachers are familiar with. I would prefer if it was new information.”
“Defining summative and formative assessments, restructuring assessments under those subheadings or creating a table. I also disagree with the idea that observations are informal.”
“I agree with everything that is being said. I just don’t see how it is any different than what is currently in practice in the classroom.”

After reviewing responses to questions nine and 10, a revised document would need to have more sources supporting the idea that using quality assessments and properly recorded evidence of achievement, as a means to implementing a standards-based grading policy, is

different and more effective than what might already be in place. A revised version of the document might benefit from further explaining how each type of assessment and recording procedures is tied specifically to standards-based grading and improving student success.

4.44: Survey 4, Question 11

Question 11: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #3? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.
--

“Please find more sources.”

“I would discuss additional assessments beyond the ones listed.”
--

Only two answers were provided in response to question 11, and no marks were made on the documents returned. This means that the document is a successful way of introducing the concept that using quality assessments and properly recorded evidence is an important step towards implementing standards-based grading. However, there is some concern over the clarity of the terms used in the document and how their use under standards-based grading is different from the way they are used with grading procedures and policies that may already be in place. If standards-based grading is to be accepted by staff, based on this phase of the research, it appears that it may be important to show how it improves student learning in contrast to other grading policies.

Phase Five: Literature and Survey on Benchmark #4

Phase five began the following week and involved providing subjects with detailed literature on benchmark #4 of the implementation of standards-based grading. Included with these documents was a survey (see appendix R) meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the concepts and the way they were introduced. Subjects were given one school week (five days) to complete the surveys and return the literature.

Five of the seven participants completed and returned the survey on benchmark #4. The results of the survey on benchmark #4 are included in the tables below.

4.45: Survey 5, Question 1

Question 1: Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #4.	
A. Very well	3
B. Fairly well	2
C. Not well enough	0

4.46: Survey 5, Question 2

Comments from Question 2: “If you answered ‘Fairly well’ or ‘Not well enough,’ what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?”
“Are there rubrics for everything, including every piece of homework?”
“I get the benchmark itself, but fail to grasp who will determine what is necessary to earn a 4, 3, 2, etc. Will it be someone at the district level? A social studies teacher hired over the summer that holds students to higher or lower standards than I do? Wording like, ‘has a complete but not detailed understanding,’ on the rubric will leave room for varied opinions on what ‘complete’ or ‘detailed’ really mean. I feel it leaves room for interpretation and takes away from the idea of being standardized.”

The responses to questions one and two make it clear that the document introduces the rubrics and gradebooks associated with standards-based grading well. However, based on the two comments included the returned surveys, it should be made clear whether or not teachers are expected to use standards-based rubrics on every assignment given. The second comment listed shows confusion over the use of terms that could be seen as subjective or open to interpretation. The concern appears to be that if teachers are responsible for scoring student work, and individual teachers have their own standards, then there might be discrepancies between two teachers of the same subject. According to the document, teachers are responsible for grading their own students, but standards and rubrics should be made collaboratively, so that students are

being graded on the same scales even if their teachers may have slight different personal standards. It may be prudent to make this clear in a revised version of the document.

4.47: Survey 5, Question 3

Question 3: Please rate how easy is it is for you to understand the creation and grading of assessments under a standards-based policy.	
A. Very easy	3
B. Somewhat easy	2
C. Not easy at all	0

4.48: Survey 5, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”
Some of the sample rubrics are confusing, as I can’t tell the difference between a 3 and a 4 based on the information provided in the rubric.
“I get how they are made, but fail to understand who will be writing them.”

This feedback suggests that the document helps educators understand the creation and grading of assessments. However, a revised version may benefit from detailing who will be responsible for creating rubrics for assessments in each course. A conversation may also need to take place to distinguish what will be the difference between student work that earns a 4 and student work that earns a 3.

4.49: Survey 5, Question 5

Question 5: Based on your experience as an educator, what struggles might an instructor encounter when attempting to reach benchmark #5?
“Time. Who has time for this? To have rubrics made so far in advance requires serious planning time. I have nine classes and one prep hour. There is zero time for preparing for lessons that truly meet the requirement of standards-based grading. I am also worried about adapting this for exceptional students (special ed, EL, gifted, etc.)”
“I would imagine this would require a lot of up front work, creating these new rubrics from the

lesson plans a teacher has already created.”
“Again, this is nothing new as presented. Rubrics are still subjective, no matter how well written. Tying each quiz, multiple choice and rubric section to a grading standard is absolutely nothing new. We as educators have been doing this since the days of the now defunct NCLB tests. If we broke every assignment down and looked at the standard for every question we could never have enough time to grade all of the papers. Most teachers (myself included) spend countless hours outside of school grading. If we were required to start grading papers using these methods I would change careers. The pay compared to the workload and stress would not be worth it.”
“The time it would take to make topic-specific rubrics.”
“There isn’t any instruction on how a teacher goes about creating their own rubric.”

This is the first question, so far, in the study where it is clear that a switch to standards-based grading may cause some anger and confusion amongst staff. Each response to this question addresses a concern about the time it might take a teacher or department to create these types of rubrics for all of their assessments. One response also addresses the idea that, while the information presented does teach the basics of rubric design, it does not give explicit instructions on how individual teachers should go about designing rubrics for their classes. It may be in a school’s best interest to coincide the distribution of this literature with meetings and discussions in regards to how and when departments will create their own, course specific, rubrics.

4.50: Survey 5, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #4 more clear?
“How to create your own rubrics”
“In the intro paragraph, it says this benchmark dictates that a teacher ensures a student knows what they can do to improve their grade. I don’t see how this is explained in the subsequent text.”
“I would like more explicit information on how districts/schools would implement these types of rubrics.”

Based on these responses, a revised version of this document should include more evidence and support from other sources. It might also be prudent, in addition to describing the different types of quality assessment, to explain the ways in which these types of assessments differ from assessments that are not of a high quality.

4.51: Survey 5, Question 7

Question 7: How relevant do you think benchmark #4 is to improving student success?	
A. Very Relevant	2
B. Relevant Enough	2
C. Not Relevant	1

4.52: Survey 5, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, “If you answered ‘Relevant enough’ or ‘Not relevant’ what could be done to the document for you to change your answer to ‘Very relevant’?”
“It seems like traditional grading would be just as helpful as using these methods ”
“Nothing. In my opinion this would be an enormous waste of time, and the students’ grades, overall, would change very little.”
“I appreciate the idea of grading accurately representing students’ grasp of standards, however, not entirely sure many students would care, or even read the rubric. For some of my classes, I would have to dedicate one day to providing assessment instructions and two or more days to going over the rubric.”

It appears that, while creating gradebooks that accurately represent student learning is relevant, over half of participants feel that creating the gradebooks associated with standards-based grading would be cumbersome, and they feel that there isn’t enough evidence of standards-based grading’s superiority over traditional grading methods to justify the amount of time it would take to alter their gradebooks. It is apparent that along with instructions and information of the processes of standards-based grading, it will be important for schools to use data to prove to their teachers that standards-based grading will result in an improvement in students’ success.

Regretfully, the researcher was unable to find empirical evidence that standards-based grading improved student achievement. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, it can be said that standards-based grading is a more collaborative and transparent method of grading, but it would be inaccurate to tell educators that, based on data, students perform better under standards-based grading.

4.53: Survey 5, Question 9

Question 9: Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #4.	
A. Positive	2
B. Neutral	1
C. Negative	11

4.54: Survey 5, Question 10

Question 10: If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?
“Instructions on how to create rubrics.”
“Again, you could not change my opinion on this. The literature is well presented, and I understand the topic completely. I just do not agree with it.”
“I find I’m mostly annoyed by it. I get the concept, but I am not getting empirical evidence that standards-based grading practices work. This is also very dry reading.”

4.55: Survey 5, Question 11

Question 11: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #4? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.
“It feels to me, and I could be very wrong (I have not read his work), that you are just re-writing Marzano’s work. Could I not just read his books to get the same information? Too much space given for example rubric/gradebook.”
“Just a clearer explanation of how this helps teachers improve their ability or consistency in letting students know how they can improve their grades?”
“I would like to see a clearer delineation between a score of 3 and 4 on the topic specific rubric.”

Again, based on the responses to question 11, a sense of skepticism and anger can be seen from some participants. The comment about reading Marzano's books to get the same information can be ignored because, while the literature did focus on Marzano's work, it was a compilation of information from *Transforming Classroom Grading* and was meant to replace a teacher's need to read the entire book. However the tone of the comment would suggest a need to correspond the literature on the suggested benchmarks with opportunities for educators to voice their concerns over the new grading policy and find ways to create clarity and acceptance. It can also be seen that some educators would be more willing to accept the added work that benchmark #4 is requiring if they had empirical proof that standards-based grading is an improvement over other grading methods.

Phase Six: Literature and Survey on Benchmark #5

Phase five began the following week and involved providing subjects with detailed literature on benchmark #5 of the implementation of standards-based grading. Included with these documents was a survey (see appendix T) meant to ascertain their understanding and approval of the concepts and the way they were introduced. Subjects were given one school week (five days) to complete the surveys and return the literature.

Four of the seven participants completed and returned the survey on benchmark #4. The results of the survey on benchmark #4 are included in the tables below.

4.56: Survey 6, Question 1

Question 1: Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #4.	
A. Very well	3
B. Fairly well	1
C. Not well enough	0

4.57: Survey 6, Question 2

Comments from Question 2: “If you answered ‘Fairly well’ or ‘Not well enough,’ what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?”

“It doesn’t really appear to me that students are involved in the grading process at all, only the assessment. I think it would be beneficial to have another example of how a student could propose an assessment in math. I can think of ways for ELA, science, and social studies, but I am having a harder time with math.”

It is clear that the document introduces the concept and benchmark of allowing students to generate assessments well. However, based on the one comment included a returned survey, a revised document may include examples of student generated assessments in each content area. It might also be necessary to distinguish the difference between the terms “assessment” and “grading” and the ways in which students can be involved in both.

4.58: Survey 6, Question 3

Question 3: Please rate how easy is it is for you to understand the involvement of students in the assessment and grading process.

A. Very easy	3
B. Somewhat easy	1
C. Not easy at all	0

4.59: Survey 6, Question 4

Comments from Question 4, “If you answered ‘Somewhat easy’ or ‘Not easy at all,’ what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?”

“I don’t see how students are involved in the grading process.”

According to the responses to questions 3-4, it again appears that it might be a good idea for a revised copy of the document to distinguish the differences between “assessment” and “grading” and describe how students can be involved in the grading process.

4.60: Survey 6, Question 5

Question 5: Based on your experience as an educator, what struggles might an instructor encounter when attempting to reach benchmark #5?
“Students taking ownership of their assessment. I can see some students struggling to come up with an assessment if/when they are struggling with the standard. I would have struggled with this. In addition, some students may not be motivated to raise their scores. Instructors may also struggle with interventions.”
“In my experience, a student who earned a low score (e.g. 2.0) would not have the skill or desire to write out a thoughtful new assessment proposal independently. The lack of independence would, thus, take extra time for teachers. Further, many, if not most of the students I work with would attempt to come up with ideas that are lacking in challenge or effort.”
“I would imagine that it may be necessary and/or helpful to students to have some example assessments ready to view to get them thinking about the many options available for assessment”
“It has been my experience that students have a tough time coming up with alternative assessments. Over time teachers may develop a repertoire of student-generated assessments to show their students, but at first it may be difficult to receive new ideas from students.”

It appears that the biggest concern in regards to including students in assessments and grading is a lack of motivation in students to create original ideas for assessments. A revised document may benefit from showcasing different student-generated assessments and grading options from schools which are using a standards-based grading policy.

4.61: Survey 6, Question 6

Question 6: In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #5 more clear?
“The final sentence was a little confusing. Why does administration have to get involved?”
“I realize now that you are summarizing what Marzano wrote because he is an authority on the subject, but I think a revised document should include other sources.”
“Is there anything additional students do to be involved in the grading process beyond deciding an alternative method for demonstrating mastery? I am having a hard time understanding how students are involved in the actual grading process for this benchmark.”

This feedback suggests that a revised document may benefit from including an explanation of why administration would need to witness student involvement in grading and assessment. It seemed obvious that administration would want to see the benchmark in action, but it might make instructors feel better to fully understand how and why administration would get involved in the implementation process. The subject who was most concerned with the lack of sources on this document seems to have begun to understand the reasoning behind limiting sources, but in order to present a wider range of support, a revised version of the document may benefit from including information from other sources. Based on feedback on this question and throughout this survey, the document may also benefit from either explaining other methods for students to get involved in the grading or assessment processes or stating that planning alternative methods for demonstrating mastery is the only way in which students need to be involved.

4.62: Survey 6, Question 7

Question 7: How relevant do you think benchmark #4 is to improving student success?	
A. Very Relevant	2
B. Relevant Enough	1
C. Not Relevant	1

4.63: Survey 6, Question 8

Comments from Question 8, "If you answered 'Relevant enough' or 'Not relevant' what could be done to the document for you to change your answer to 'Very relevant'?"
"Convince me this works. I would like to see empirical evidence that including students in assessment is beneficial"
"I would like more clarification on how students can be involved in the grading process"

The majority of participants felt that benchmark #4 is relevant to student success. However, once again a desire for empirical proof of the specific benefits of reaching this benchmark was addressed. This type of evidence, evidence which shows empirically that standards-based grading practices positively impacts student performance was not found during the literature review. Revised versions of each of the documents would benefit from examples of success in standards-based grading from other schools. This document may also benefit from discussing how students are involved in the grading process and not only the assessment process.

4.64: Survey 6, Question 9

Question 9: Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #4.	
A. Positive	2
B. Neutral	1
C. Negative	1

4.65: Survey 6, Question 10

Question 10: If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?
“I like that it was short, but I’d like to see more diversity in citations and support for the claims made. I believe including students in assessment and grading will take more time for teachers.”
“If more research were added to support the claims, I would have a more positive impression.”

The Majority of participants have a positive impression of the document. However, there was one participant who was left with a negative impression, and both responses to question ten mention a desire for more diversity in the resources used to create the document. The reasoning for using only one or two sources to create these documents was to simplify the information, but also to mimic one of the ways in which standards-based grading is typically introduced to educators, through the reading of one reputable text on the subject. Typically, schools do not distribute multiple resources on the subject, but instead focus on one or two reputable texts for

teachers to study as the implement standards-based grading. Based on the feedback from question 10, it may be prudent to include multiple sources when creating literature for each benchmark.

4.66: Survey 6, Question 11

Question 11: What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #4? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

“If it exists, I think teachers would benefit from seeing evidence that having students take ownership of their assessments avoids re-teaching and reassessment.”

The one response to question 11 shows a concern that including students in the assessment process may make it difficult for students to take ownership of their work and that creating the option for second chances may mean more work for teachers in terms of re-teaching and reassessment. During the literature review for this research, there was no specific evidence that showed that teachers can avoid re-teaching and reassessment by including students in the process, but if it is available it would be worthwhile to include it in a revised version of this document.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Standards-based grading's presence in education has been steadily on the rise. An increasing number of schools are attempting to reform their grading practices in a way that is more focused on students' mastery of learning standards than subjective, standards-referenced policies (Scriffiny 2008). However, many teachers are put off by standards based grading, and the policies have proven difficult to implement (Engler, 2013). This is why I felt it prudent to look for the best ways to introduce standards-based grading to educators. I used well respected literature on the subject, mostly from Robert J. Marzano, to create documents meant to introduce my research subjects to some of standards-based grading's major elements. I also modified benchmarks created by a school which had previously implemented standards-based grading, as a means to develop a sort of timeline for the distribution of literature on standards-based grading and the topics specific to each benchmark (*Standards of Practice for Grading and Reporting, 2012*). My subjects were given the literature on each benchmark for implementation and surveyed on their understanding and satisfaction with the documents as well as the ideas behind standards-based reform. This study set out to answer the question, "How can instructional staff be effectively introduced to a standards-based grading policy?"

Major Findings

Based on the results of my survey, it is apparent that educators are receptive to the theories of standards-based grading found in the literature provided. Each survey had a majority of positive responses to the documents and the ideas held within. It could be said, then, that if a school is attempting to implement standards-based grading, the benchmarks modified for this

study and the corresponding literature are an acceptable means of introducing educators to standards-based grading.

However, there were a number of responses throughout the surveys that expressed a concern over the amount of time it would take to implement these changes. There was also considerable concern over the relevancy of switching to standards-based grading. In other words, a number of subjects felt that there was no empirical proof provided that showed switching to standards-based grading will positively impact their practice and their students' performance. Upon reflection, it has occurred to me that during the literature review, I did not come upon any side by side comparison or research which proves, empirically, that standards-based grading results in school improvement. The support for standards-based grading reviewed for this capstone is mostly theoretical and anecdotal. Many teachers are responsive to the theories of standards-based grading, but based on the research done for this study, it is understandable that an educator may need more specific proof of the value of standards-based grading before investing in making such a dramatic change.

It is clear, based on this study, that a school must combine any instruction and literature on the subject of standards-based grading with in-depth discussions on the reasoning behind wanting to implement the policy. Teachers' voices will also need to be heard during the implementation process, so that any discontent can be dealt with efficiently.

Limitations of This Study

This study had several limitations. The first of which was my small sample size. When I began my research, I felt the sample size was large enough, but as the study went on, I received fewer completed surveys. While there was still a majority of positive response to the documents,

had each participant submitted a completed survey for each document, the findings may have been slightly different. A second limitation was certain subjects' negative opinions of standards-based grading. It became clear that one or more of the subjects had a very poor opinion of standards-based grading, and as such, could not look at the documents objectively. The final limitation was the diversity of my subjects' current practice. All of my subjects have worked in a variety of educational settings at one point or another, but they are all currently working in an alternative education setting. I had initially thought that the diverse backgrounds of my subjects would allow them to think about the ways standards-based grading may affect all students, but based on some responses, it was clear that at times, they were only considering the kind of students they currently work with.

Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the major findings of this survey, I feel it would be useful to apply these kinds of surveys to the entire implementation process, from start to finish. This study only covered the first five to six weeks of implementation. It appears that it may take a number of years for the implementation process to be complete. A doctoral thesis may continue this study further into the implementation process. A longer-term study of the implementation of standards-based grading would also be helpful in providing evidence of whether or not standards-based grading is an improvement on other grading policies. During my literature review, the resources I found that were supportive of a move to standards-based grading were mostly theoretical or anecdotal in nature. The subjects of my research and I, although encouraged by the concepts of standards-based grading, would like to have access to sources that show a side by side comparison of how a school performed before and after the implementation of standards-based

grading. Data which supports the idea that effectively switching to standards-based grading always results in improvements in teaching and learning would be helpful in convincing educators that changing to standards-based grading is worthwhile.

APPENDIX A
Consent Form for Participation in Case-Study

Case Report: Effective Methods for Introducing a Standards-Based Grading Policy

Principal Investigator: Joseph Millard, B.A. Language Arts, MAT Candidate
Hamline University
612-730-3336

You are being asked to consider allowing Mr. Joseph Millard, a graduate student completing a graduate degree at Hamline University, to use information about your experience with standards-based grading to write what is called a case report. Case reports are typically used to share new, unique information experienced by a student, parent, or educational staff during his/her experience with a particular educational subject that may be useful for other educators and educational professionals. A case report may be published for others to read, and/or presented at a conference. This form explains the purpose of this case report. Please read this form carefully and take your time to make your decision and ask any questions that you may have.

This research will be public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and it may be published and used in other ways.

The purpose of this case report is to inform Mr. Joseph Millard's research on the effective introduction of standards-based grading to staff as it concerns the writing of his final capstone project in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Hamline University.

In recent years, standards-based grading has been an increasingly popular grading policy. Mr. Millard will be referencing popular literature on the topic as well as the experiences, both positive and negative, of instructors who have introduced a standards-based grading policy to create a well-rounded introduction plan for the first semester of discussions on standards-based grading. As a staff member, your feedback will help Mr. Millard create literature for effectively introducing standards-based grading.

Your information being used for this case report will include feedback, concerns, and suggestions on the literature involved in introducing a new standards-based grading policy.

As a staff member of Intermediate District 287 and/or Gateway to College and a participant in this study, you will be informed on and participate in the introduction process over 5 weeks. You will be asked to read through literature on the concepts and benchmarks associated with standards-based grading and participate in four corresponding surveys that will take qualitative measurements of your satisfaction with and understanding of standards-based grading. You will be given the educational literature on Mondays and the surveys on Wednesdays over the 5 weeks. The completed surveys will be destroyed after completion of my study. These surveys--and your participation in this case report will be strictly anonymous. Your name or any identifying information will not be included in collected data or published material.

Research and writing are dynamic activities, and as such, the focus of this project may shift, slightly, based on experience and feedback.

There is little to no risk if you choose to participate in this study. All results will be confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms for the district, schools, and participants will be used. Mr. Millard is obligated to protect your privacy and not disclose your personal information (information about you that identifies you as an individual e.g. name, date of birth). When the case report is published or presented, your identity will not be disclosed.

You will not directly benefit from participating in this case report. The published information that can be shared with other educational professionals, however, may improve the instruction and grading that is administered and received by yourself and others in the future.

Allowing your information to be used in this case report will not involve any additional costs to you. You will not receive any compensation.

Taking part in this case report is your choice (voluntary). You may choose not to take part or you may change your mind at any time. However, once the case report is written and published, it will not be possible for you to withdraw it. Your decision will not result in any penalty.

You will be told about any new information relating to this case report that may affect you.

Your signature on the attached document means that you have read the above information about this Case Report and have had a chance to ask questions to help you understand how your information will be used and that you give permission to allow your information to be used in this case report.

If you have any questions please contact Mr. Joseph Millard.

612-730-3336
jpmillard@district287.org
jmillard01@hamline.edu

Consent from Intermediate District 287

July 8, 2015

Joe Millard
jpmillard@district287.org

Dear Mr. Millard:

This letter is to inform you that you have permission to proceed with your thesis case study research project for completion of your MAT degree at Hamline University.

I understand you will conduct the project at Gateway to College Academy where you are currently teaching. Teachers will be participants in the case study research project. The purpose of the project is to conduct a case-study on the effective methods for the introduction of standards-based grading at Gateway to College during the fall semester of 2015 and to publish data which you collect during the proposed project for Hamline University's Master of Arts in Teaching program. After this study is completed we will receive a summary report of aggregated findings for the study as well as the specific finding. To maintain confidentiality, all data in this report will be de-identified.

We look forward to receiving the results of your research project.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Lodge Rogers, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Student Services and Educational Programs

SUBJECT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Case Report: The Effective Introduction of Standards-Based Grading

I am agreeing to participate, as stated above, in a case-study in which Mr. Joseph Millard will be collecting data on effective methods for the introduction of a standards-based grading policy during the fall semester of 2015 at Gateway to College Academy.

Name of Participant: _____

Participant

By signing this form, I confirm that:

- The case report has been fully explained to me and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction
- I have been informed of the risks and benefits, if any, of participating in this case report
- I have been informed that I do not have to participate in this case report
- I have read each page of this form
- I have agreed to participate in this case report

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

If you have any questions please contact Mr. Joseph Millard.

612-730-3336

jpmillard@district287.org

jmillard01@hamline.edu

APPENDIX B

Foundational Literature on Standards-Based Grading

TO: Case-Study Participants
FROM: Joe Millard, Researcher
DATE: 11/12/2015
RE: Effective Methods for Introducing Standards-Based Grading

Greetings,

Over the next five weeks, I will be introducing you to the concepts and benchmarks associated with the first semester of the implementation of a standards-based grading policy. This document includes literature that covers the basic concepts, benefits, and struggles associated with an educator's introduction to standards-based grading. After you have read through it, I ask that you complete the corresponding survey. I am looking for feedback on how well the documents help you understand what standards-based grading is, and I am also interested in how you feel I might improve the way the information is presented. My goal is to combine your feedback with the literature I have reviewed to revise these documents and answer the question, "What are the most effective methods for introducing standards-based grading to instructional staff?" The qualitative data I collect from you will also be published in my final capstone project. All of your identities will remain anonymous. I appreciate your help and honest feedback throughout the duration of my study. This study does not reflect a new direction for the district. None of you will be expected to alter your own grading practices.

The following information was compiled in an effort to consolidate the principles of standards-based grading into a digestible piece of literature for introducing educational staff to the concept. If you are familiar with standards-based grading in any way, try to read the document from the perspective of someone who is new to the information. Before, during, and after reading, ask yourself, "Do I know what standards-based grading is and how it might impact my work?" Keeping this question in mind will allow you to respond to the survey in a way that may help create a more complete and effective piece of introductory literature on standards-based grading.

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading is a method of predefined ranking that places emphasis on whether or not a student has learned the skills described in institutionalized learning standards. Standards-based grading dictates that learning standards, also referred to as performance standards, are created or chosen collaboratively by members of a course's respective department (Marzano, 2010, p.17). At the beginning of every term, students are introduced to each standard of assessment in their courses. Units, objectives, and major summative assessments are also detailed ahead of time in a course's syllabus or calendar. During each unit, students are prepared to demonstrate a mastery of the selected standards using a variety of differentiated teaching strategies, projects, quizzes, and assignments (Marzano, 2000, p. 31). All student work is graded based on the standard or standards the project is addressing through the use of specific rubrics for each standard. This feature illustrates the greatest distinction between standards-based grading and standards-referenced grading. Standards-referenced grading is the percentage-based grading policies, which refer to performance standards but are not based on them, that many educators are used to (Marzano, 2010, p. 18).

A standards-based grading policy details that subjective, non-academic standards, such as homework and behavior, have only a minor impact on a student's grade. If a student does not participate well in class, or some of their formative work is lacking, but they can still demonstrate an acceptable level of mastery, that student has learned what is desired and should not be academically punished (Guskey, 2009, p. 15). Rather than allowing poor grades to become a permanent consequence of a student's actions, standards-based grading asks that students are given multiple opportunities to pass each summative assessment and demonstrate a mastery of performance standards. One of the driving concepts behind standards-based grading is that students should be graded on what they learn and not when and how they learn. When, there is a pattern of failure on a particular standard, it is the teacher's responsibility to intervene and find ways to reteach and reassess the principles of that standard (Guskey, 2009, p.22).

Standards-based grading is a way for educators to provide students with an accurate measure of their progress as it relates to academic standards. Where assessment is concerned, standards-based grading seeks to create cohesion between all teachers within a program (Guskey, 2009, p.117).

The standards-based grading scale of 1.00-4.00:

Standards-based grading relies on a grading scale of 0.00-4.00. Every time a standard is assessed, a rubric is used to rate the student's performance on that specific standard. Rubrics should be tailored for specific standards, and if an assessment covers more than one standard, the rubric should include rubric criteria for each. Below is an example of a generic standards-based rubric (Excelsior Springs High School, 2012). Notice that each score is attached to specific feedback.

4.0: The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the [standard], is ready to move on to the next relevant [standard], and can apply learned concepts to new material.

3.0: The student has mastered the targeted knowledge and skills (standards) for the class and is ready to move on to the next relevant [standard].

2.0: The student understands the foundational material that supports the targeted learning, but is still working to master the complex material for the class. The student will be ready to move forward after receiving additional instruction from their teacher.

1.0: The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational material for the class with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently. The student is not ready to advance to the next [standard].

0.0: Even with assistance from the teacher, the student demonstrates little or no understanding of the [standard]. If progress is not made [before the end of the term] the student will not receive credit for the course and will not be able to move on to the next level.

The intermediate scores of 0.5, 1.5, 2.5, and 3.5 can also be used to show that a student has demonstrated partial mastery of the next level of learning.

Technically, final grades on a standards-based report card should be the average, out of 4.0, on their assessments in each standard category, but most online grading tools and existing grading policies require a percentage and letter grade, so during the initial stages of implementation, the 4.0 scale can be converted to a letter grade using the grading scale shown below (Marzano, 2000, p. 114).

A: 3.75 – 4.00	B-: 2.75 – 2.99	D+: 1.50 – 1.74
A-: 3.50 – 3.74	C+: 2.50 – 2.74	D: 1.25 – 1.49
B+: 3.25 – 3.49	C: 2.00 – 2.49	D-: 1.00 – 1.24
B: 3.00 – 3.24	C-: 1.75 – 1.99	F: 0.00 – 0.99

To earn credit, a student must at least demonstrate a basic comprehension of the foundational skills taught in a class. A grade in the C range shows that the student has acquired all of the foundational skills of the course and can demonstrate them without help. A grade in the B range communicates a student's mastery of the complex, targeted knowledge in the class. A grade in the A range, communicates a student's in-depth, advanced understanding of the material (p. 82).

If a student scores below a 2.00 (C-), overall, on a given performance standard, they are expected to participate in interventions, and do what is necessary to raise their grade (Marzano, 2010, p. 96).

Why would a school want to implement a standards-based grading policy?

The motivation behind a switch to standards-based grading is for a school to find ways to ensure that curriculum, assessments, and grades are directly tied to academic standards and are not subjectively based on an individual teacher's expectations and averages.

According to Excelsior Springs School District in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, if a standards-based grading policy is implemented properly, it should have the following characteristics.

Accuracy: Grades are based on academics alone. Students gain a clear understanding of what they have learned rather than how well they participate or behave.

Consistency: The rubrics for assessment are designed to be largely the same throughout a building, and each score on a rubric is attached to specific feedback that has been agreed upon by all staff. The repeated use of these rubrics makes grading more consistent and transparent to all parties involved. Standards-based rubrics and assessments are created collaboratively between teachers in each department, so expectations and procedures will be similar throughout a program.

Meaning: While a student's final grade hinges on all of their work and participation, the biggest factor in their advancement is performance on well-planned, standards-aligned summative assessments. Students receive grades that communicate only the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout the term as they relate to learning standards.

Guided support: A standards-based curriculum focuses on what students have or have not learned rather than the accumulation of points. When a student is unsuccessful, under standards-based grading, there should be room in the schedule for planned interventions and multiple opportunities to master and demonstrate the skills they have been struggling with (*Frequently Asked Questions*).

Potential struggles associated with the implementation of standards-based grading

Standards-based grading involves major changes to a teacher's practice, and as a result, in some schools, its implementation has been slowed. Some reasons for struggle during the implementation process are described below.

The difficulty of change: Long-established grading policies and practices pose obstacles to the implementation of standards-based grading because the change is dramatic. During a switch to standards-based grading, teachers need to reevaluate their entire curriculum. This process takes time and effort (Guskey, 2009, p. 2-3).

Grading students with exceptionalities: Assigning fair and accurate standards-based grades to students with special learning needs can be a struggle because these students traditionally require accommodations that are subjective in nature, while standards-based grading is inherently objective (p. 27-38).

Grading ELL students: Assigning fair and accurate standards-based grades to students who are English language learners and communicating the meaning of those grades to parents or guardians can be difficult because standards-based grading asks that these students, who have very unique circumstances, be held to the same standards as their English speaking peers (p. 41-52).

Retakes/multiple opportunities: Some schools that have reported struggles with the implementation process say that one of the biggest issues of contention amongst teaching staff is the mandate to provide students with multiple opportunities to retake and pass summative assessments. Providing these opportunities and coordinating interventions, while maintaining standards-appropriate progress, can seem to require more time than available in a given term (p. 94-95).

Teacher accountability: The success of a standards-based grading policy lies heavily on classroom teachers. Learning and implementing the principles of standards-based grading requires work and oversight different from what teachers are used to (p. 57-67).

Inconsistencies: After switching to a standards-based policy, some teachers have noticed inconsistencies between student performance under standards-based grading and their previous grading policies. This can cause a great deal of controversy, as students who might have been successful under a standards-referenced, percentage-based policy could potentially see a drop in their performance, and vice versa (p. 74-104).

Conclusion

Standards-based grading is a way for a school to normalize its grading policies across every classroom. Grades are based on a student's mastery of academic standards and should not be impacted by performance in subjective areas such as behavior or work ethic. Formative assessment, homework, and non-academic standards are important in that they prepare students for major summative assessments, but they should not weigh heavily on a student's GPA.

Students are assessed on a scale of 0.00-4.00 and must earn a score of at least 2.00 to have successfully demonstrated acceptable mastery of a standard. If a student has not demonstrated mastery, they must be given other opportunities for learning and assessment on that standard throughout a term. The effective implementation of standards-based grading depends on collaboration between teachers to choose appropriate performance standards and create effective assessments and grading rubrics.

Attached to this document, you will find an example of the benchmarks that might guide a school's first semester of the implementation of standards-based grading. Read through them and fill out the corresponding survey. Over the next five weeks, you will receive detailed information and surveys on each benchmark and the ways in which teachers might be expected to demonstrate that they have been reached.

APPENDIX C

Benchmarks for the Implementation of Standards-Based Grading

Below, are potential benchmarks for the first semester of the implementation of a standards-based grading policy. Based on the information you have just read about standards-based grading, you will be asked to reflect on how effective these benchmarks are at communicating what teachers need to do to begin implementing standards-based grading, if these benchmarks seem realistic and attainable, and if there might be better ways of presenting these benchmarks to instructional staff. Over the next five weeks, you will also be receiving literature that discusses each benchmark in greater detail.

These benchmarks were developed through the synthesis of benchmarks created by a school with an existing standards-based grading policy and the review of literature on the fundamentals of the implementation process (*Standards of practice for grading and reporting*).

Benchmark #1: Student academic grades will communicate academic achievement based on clearly-defined academic performance standards.

- 1a. Course/grade-level standards will provide the basis for determining grades for each course and grade level.
- 1b. Grades will be determined by comparing student work to grade-level standards (not by comparing to other students' work).

Benchmark #2: Academic achievement will be separated from all other non-academic behaviors when teachers assign student grades.

- 2a. While recognizing that student collaboration is a key instructional strategy, grades must be based on individual, not group, achievement.

Benchmark #3: Quality assessments and properly recorded evidence of achievement will be used when determining grades on student work.

- 3a. A minimum of 80% of the term grade will be determined by summative assessments (such as unit or course tests, performance tasks, projects, etc.). The remaining percentage may include classwork, homework, and other formative assessment results.
- 3b. Teacher professional judgment plays an important role in the grading process, including the responsibility to override computer-calculated grades when there is evidence that calculated grade does not accurately represent the student's attainment of the standards.
- 3c. Students will be provided with multiple opportunities and multiple modalities (within reasonable time limitations) to show what they know and understand.

Benchmark #4: Term grades will be determined in a manner that accurately represents students' attainment of the standards and promotes student learning.

- 4a. Teachers will ensure that students understand in advance how their grades will be determined.

Benchmark #5: Teachers will involve students in the assessment and grading process throughout the learning cycle in an age appropriate manner.

APPENDIX D
Initial Reaction to Standards-Based Grading and Benchmarks

Participant Survey (1)

1. After reading these documents, how well do you feel you understand the concepts of standards-based grading?

- A. Very well
- B. Fairly well
- C. Not well enough

2. If you answered “Fairly well” or “Not well enough” what could be done to the documents to help you better understand the concepts?

3. How easy is it to understand the grading scales and procedures used in standards-based grading?

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

4. If you answered “Somewhat easy” or “Not easy at all” what could be done to the documents to make the grading scales and procedures more understandable?

5. Of the struggles associated with implementing standards-based grading listed in the documents, which is the most concerning to you? Why?

6. In your own words, based on the literature provided, what might be the best reason for switching to a standards-based grading policy?

7. Look at the literature and benchmarks I have provided. How easy is it to understand what is expected of teachers during the implementation process?

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

8. If you answered “Somewhat easy” or “Not easy at all” what could be done to the document to make the expectations easier to understand?

9. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on standards-based grading and the corresponding benchmarks? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual documents.

10. Have you ever been educated on or attempted to use standards-based grading in the past? If so, are these documents in-line with your previous understanding of standards-based grading? If not, what seems unclear, confusing, or arduous about these documents?

11. What is your overall impression of standards-based grading after reading these documents?

A. Positive

B. Neutral

C. Negative

12. If you selected “neutral” or “negative”, what could be done to these documents to make you change your answer to “positive”?

APPENDIX E

Educational Literature on Standards-Based Grading Benchmark #1

“Student academic grades will communicate academic achievement based on clearly-defined academic performance standards.”

The first step towards implementing a standards-based grading policy is to create agreed-upon, academic performance standards. These performance standards will guide instruction and assessment throughout the term.

Robert J. Marzano has published some of the most definitive literature on standards-based grading in his books, *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading* and *Transforming Classroom Grading*. According to Marzano, standards-based grading is “Grading that references student achievement to specific topics within each subject area” (p. 17). This definition suggests that a big part of an educator’s understanding of standards-based grading hinges on their knowledge of the agreed upon areas of learning within their subject area. To give an idea of what a performance standard is, Marzano supplies the common measurement topics for language arts in the following table.

A1: Examples of Common Measurement Topics in Language Arts

Reading	Writing	Listening and Speaking
Word recognition and vocabulary	Spelling	Listening comprehension
Reading comprehension	Language Mechanics and conventions	Analysis and evaluation of oral media
Literary analysis	Research and technology	Speaking applications
	Evaluation and revision	

(18)

Once the standards of a subject area are identified and agreed upon, the implementation of standards-based grading involves creating assessments and corresponding rubrics for each. Standards-based rubrics and gradebooks supply students with a score of advanced (4), proficient (3), basic (2), or below basic (0-1) for each of the courses standards. Receiving an overall score of basic or higher in each standard category results in a student’s advancement to the next level of instruction and demonstrates that instructor intervention is not needed (Marzano, 2010, p. 18).

This benchmark asks that content-area departments work to agree upon and publish performance standards for each of their courses. These standards should be decided upon and shared prior to the start of the first semester of implementation.

APPENDIX F
Follow-Up survey (2)

This survey is to be completed after you have read the literature which describes in detail Benchmark #1, “Student academic grades will communicate academic achievement based on clearly-defined academic performance standards.”

1. Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #1.

- | |
|--------------------|
| A. Very well |
| B. Fairly well |
| C. Not well enough |

2. If you chose “fairly well” or “not well”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very well”?

3. Please rate how easy it is for you to understand the creation of performance standards for a particular course.

- | |
|--------------------|
| A. Very easy |
| B. Somewhat easy |
| C. Not easy at all |

4. If you chose “somewhat easy” or “not easy at all”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very easy”?

5. Of the problems associated with standards-based grading listed in the initial document you received, which do you think might apply to implementing benchmark #1?

6. In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #1 more clear.

7. How relevant do you think benchmark is to improving student success?

- | |
|--------------------|
| A. Very Relevant |
| B. Relevant enough |
| C. Not relevant |

8. If you chose “relevant enough” or “not relevant”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very relevant”?

9. Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #1.

- | |
|-------------|
| A. Positive |
| B. Neutral |
| C. Negative |

10. If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?

11. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #1? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

APPENDIX G

Educational Literature on Benchmark #2

“Academic achievement will significantly outweigh all other non-academic behaviors when teachers assign student grades.”

Turning young people into functioning members of society requires a wide variety of activities and lessons that extend beyond academic performance standards. Schools should be places for students to learn how to behave properly and conduct themselves in a professional manner (Schmoker & Marzano, 1999 p. 17). If there is only focus on intellectual pursuits, schools run the risk of producing one-dimensional, potentially ill-behaved graduates. This is why many teachers include a student’s work-ethic and behavior in their subjective, standards-referenced grading practices (p. 18). However, including non-academic factors in a student’s grade may cause their personality to outweigh their abilities, and the ways in which they impact grades need to be seriously reconsidered (p. 21).

In his book, *Transforming Classroom Grading*, Robert Marzano (2000) identifies four “nonachievement” factors that many teachers consider when administering grades. They are effort, behavior, cooperation, and attendance (p. 3). Figure 2.2, taken from *Transforming Classroom Grading* shows the differences in a “percentage of teachers reporting use of effort, behavior, cooperation, and attendance in determining grades” (p. 4). The table illustrates inconsistencies in the inclusion of non-academic factors in student grades and demonstrates how the subjectivity of teacher-driven grading policies might potentially have an undue negative impact on performance.

A2: Inclusion of Nonachievement Factors

Grade Level	Effort	Behavior	Cooperation	Attendance
K [71 teachers polled]	31%	7%	4%	8%
1-3 [110 teachers polled]	29%	8%	4%	8%
4-6 [158 teachers polled]	30%	8%	8%	10%
7-9 [142 teachers polled]	36%	10%	8%	18%
10-12 [151 teachers polled]	36%	14%	9%	24%

(Marzano, 2000, p. 4).

From a statistical standpoint, this table suggests that teacher-based grading policies which include non-academic factors are varied and will create varying results throughout grade levels and subject area (Marzano, 2000, p. 9).

Marzano’s research indicates a need for limiting and formalizing the impact of non-academic factors on students’ grades. Notice how an average of 32% of teachers include effort into their assessments. Visible Effort is important to success, but it does not demonstrate a student’s mastery of standards, and if it is included inconsistently in gradebooks, students are going to get a mixed message about how valuable simply trying is. If academic performance can be clearly separated from non-academic standards, students benefit from not passing or failing a class based on the subjectivity of the teacher they are assigned when they may have, despite any behavior or work ethic issues, demonstrated a mastery of the performance standards (Schmoker, & Marzano, 1999).

Under standards-based grading, a student must pass all of a courses summative assessments by receiving an overall grade of at least 2.0 in each performance standard category. Formative assessments, effort, behavior, and participation can only measure 20% of a student’s final grade. These factors must also be clearly separated from performance standards on a teacher’s grade book. One solution that has worked for schools with standards-based grading policies is to calculate a separate grade for their students’ behavior and professionalism. The grade doesn’t

impact a student's GPA but does illustrate a student's non-academic issues to students, parents, and institutions (Marzano, 2000, p. 10).

On the following page, one will find one example of how a gradebook can look under a standards-based policy.

“Recorded Evidence” (A detailed and well-planned grade book).

A standards-based grade book provides information about student achievement within specific courses. Ideally, standards-based grading encourages teachers to provide this information without awarding an overall grade, but because grading software still calculates final grades in such a way, and post-secondary institutions still primarily base their acceptance of students on cumulative GPA, it makes sense to convert standards based grades into an academic grade as well as an overall grade. To convert grades into a final letter grade a teacher can use the chart on the initial document introducing standards-based grading (Marzano 2000, p. 106-115).

What to include in a teacher's gradebook

When using standards-based grading, a gradebook should include weighted categories for each standard. If the academic performance standards for Algebra II are Numeric Problem Solving, Computation, Measurement, Geometry, Probability, Functions, and Data Analysis, each of those would get its own category, and the weight of all of them would need to be at least 80% of a student's grade. Assessments for each would be placed in their respective standard category, each standard would need at least one summative assessment, and a final score needs to be calculated for each category.

It is acceptable to include non-academic factors in a standards-based grade book, as long as they do not impact more than 20% of a student's grade. If a teacher wants to include Decision Making, Written and Oral Communication, and effort in their grade book, each of those would also get their own category and any corresponding assessment would be included in those categories. A final score for each non-academic category also needs to be calculated. Academic scores are then separated from non-academic scores on the gradebook but can be combined to reach an overall score (106).

Teachers are expected to demonstrate the reaching of this benchmark, by submitting their gradebook for review at the end of the first quarter of the implementation process.

APPENDIX H
Follow-Up Survey (3)

This survey is to be completed after you have read the literature which describes in detail Benchmark #2, “Academic achievement will be separated from all other non-academic behaviors when teachers assign student grades.”

1. Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #2.

- A. Very well
- B. Fairly well
- C. Not well enough

2. If you chose “fairly well” or “not well”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very well”?

3. Please rate how easy it is for you to understand the reasoning behind only including academic factors in a student’s grade.

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

4. If you chose “somewhat easy” or “not easy at all”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very easy”?

5. Of the problems associated with standards-based grading listed in the initial document you received, which do you think might apply to implementing benchmark #2?

6. In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #2 more clear.

7. How relevant do you think benchmark #2 is to improving student success?

- A. Very Relevant
- B. Relevant enough
- C. Not relevant

8. If you chose “relevant enough” or “not relevant”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very relevant”?

9. Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #2.

- A. Positive
- B. Neutral
- C. Negative

10. If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?

11. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #2? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

APPENDIX I

Educational Literature on Benchmark #3

“Quality assessments and properly recorded evidence of achievement will be used when determining grades on student work.”

In his book, *Transforming Classroom Grading*, Robert Marzano details the seven types of assessments used by teachers to grade students and how they apply to standards-based grading.

Forced-Choice assessments: Respondents are asked a series of questions. Each question is followed by a range of possible responses. Students must select the correct answer or the best answer of the choices provided. Students are assessed based on the number of correct responses (p. 88).

Forced-Choice assessments are better used as formative assessment in preparation for a summative assessment. Forced-choice assessments have a small margin of error because students have an ability to guess the correct answer. Guessing the correct answer does not demonstrate a mastery of performance standards, but reviewing the questions and answers on a forced-choice assessment can help students prepare for other ways of demonstrating their mastery. Standards-based grading also encourages the use of using grading rubrics to communicate a student's grade, and forced-choice assessments, by design, are not well-suited to be scored by grading rubrics (p. 88-91).

Essays/Short Written Response Questions: Essays and short written response questions involve providing the student with a question or writing prompt and giving them the opportunity to respond in complete sentences (p. 92).

Written assessments should be used as summative assessments. There is very little risk of students guessing correct answers and they are easily scored with rubrics. Essay instructions should be designed to include information which students can use in their answers. This way essay questions are simply assessing a student's ability to recall information. A well written essay question will allow students to demonstrate their thinking and reasoning abilities based on the context of the question (93).

Oral Reports: According to Marzano, “Oral reports are like essays except that they are delivered orally” (p. 96).

Using oral reports for assessing students' mastery of performance standards has the same benefits as using written responses.

Performance Tasks: “A performance task is any learning activity or assessment that asks students to *perform* to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and proficiency. Performance tasks yield a tangible product and/or performance that serve as evidence of learning. Unlike a [forced-choice] item (e.g., multiple-choice or matching) that asks students to select from given alternatives, a performance task presents a situation that calls for learners to apply their learning in context. Performance tasks are routinely used in certain disciplines, such as visual and performing arts, physical education, and career-technology where performance is the natural focus of instruction. However, such tasks can be used in every subject area and at all grade levels”

Performance tasks are highly encouraged under standards-based grading. They can be used as summative or formative assessments. Performance tasks allow teachers to assess students' understanding of informational and process topics, their ability to think and reason, their ability to communicate, and also has some applications in assessing non-academic factors like effort and collaboration (Marzano 2000, p. 87).

Teacher-Observation: Assessing students based on teacher observation involves collecting data on, “informal conversations with students and observations of students that teachers make all day, every day” (p. 99).

Teacher observation is a fine way to assess non-academic factors, but it is too informal for assessing formative or summative assessments (p. 99).

Student Self-Assessment: Student self-assessments are opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning. These are most often assigned after a teacher-lead assessment as a way for students to analyze their performance (p. 102).

Student self-assessments are encouraged under standards-based grading as formative assessments because they provide students an opportunity to identify why they are or are not ready for major summative assessments (p. 105).

Each of these seven types of assessment can be used with a standards-based gradebook, but a teacher should consider which types are more appropriate for summative, formative, or non-academic assessment when designing their curriculum.

“Recorded Evidence” (A detailed and well-planned grade book).

A standards-based grade book provides information about student achievement within specific courses. Ideally, standards-based grading encourages teachers to provide this information without awarding an overall grade, but because grading software still calculates final grades in a such a way, and post-secondary institutions still primarily base their acceptance of students on cumulative GPA, it makes sense to convert standards based grades into an academic grade as well as an overall grade. To convert grades into a final letter grade a teacher can use the chart on the initial document introducing standards-based grading (Marzano 2000, p. 106-115).

What to include in a teacher’s gradebook

When using standards-based grading, a gradebook should include weighted categories for each standard. If the academic performance standards for Algebra II are Numeric Problem Solving, Computation, Measurement, Geometry, Probability, Functions, and Data Analysis, each of those would get its own category, and the weight of all of them would need to be at least 80% of a student's grade. Assessments for each would be placed in their respective standard category, each standard would need at least one summative assessment, and a final score needs to be calculated for each category.

It is acceptable to include non-academic factors in a standards-based grade book, as long as they do not impact more than 20% of a student’s grade. If a teacher wants to include Decision Making, Written and Oral Communication, and effort in their grade book, each of those would also get their own category and any corresponding assessment would be included in those categories. A final score for each non-academic category also needs to be calculated. Academic scores are then separated from non-academic scores on the gradebook but can be combined to reach an overall score (p. 106).

On the following pages, please review Marzano’s standards-based report card example taken from *Transforming Classroom Grading* (p.107-108).

Teachers are expected to demonstrate the reaching of this benchmark, by submitting their gradebook for review at the end of the first semester of the implementation process.

A3: Example Standards-Based Report Card

Figure 7.4 A Report Card with Overall Grades and Standards				
Name: Al Einstein Address: 1111 City: Relativity, CO 80000 Grade level 11	Course Titles: Algebra II and Trigonometry Physics U.S. History American Literature Physical Education	Grade C A B C B	Course Titles: Chorus Geography Current GPA: Cumulative GPA	Grade B B 2.95 3.23
Standards Rating				
Algebra II and Trigonometry		(1)	(2)	(3) (4)
Mathematics Standard 1:	Numeric Problem Solving	-----	1.75	
Mathematics Standard 2:	Computation	-----		
Mathematics Standard 3:	Measurement	-----	2.5	
Mathematics Standard 4:	Geometry	-----	2.75	
Mathematics Standard 5:	Probability	-----	2.5	
Mathematics Standard 6:	Functions	1		
Mathematics Standard 7:	Data Analysis	-----	2.25	
Reasoning Standard:	Decision Making	-----	2.5	
Communication Standard:	Written	---1.25		
Communication Standard:	Oral	--- 1.25		
Nonachievement Factor:	Effort	-----	1.5	
Mathematics Achievement: 2.13 Overall: 1.95				
AP Physics		(1)	(2)	(3) (4)
Science Standard 1:	Structure/Properties of Matter	-----	4.0	
Science Standard 2:	Energy Types	-----	3.75	
Science Standard 3:	Motion	-----	4.0	
Science Standard 4:	Forces	-----	4.0	
Reasoning Standard:	Experimental Inquiry	-----	4.0	
Communication Standard:	Audience	1.0		
Nonachievement Factor:	Behavior	-----	3.25	
Science Achievement: 3.94 Overall: 3.73				
U.S. History		(1)	(2)	(3) (4)
History Standard 1:	Civilization and Society	-----	2.0	
History Standard 2:	Exploration & Colonization	-----	3.25	
History Standard 3:	Revolution and Conflict	-----	4.0	
History Standard 4:	Industry and Commerce	-----	2.75	
History Standard 5:	Forms of Government	-----	2.5	
Reasoning Standard:	Comparing and Contrasting	-----	3.5	
Reasoning Standard:	Making Deductions	-----	4.0	
Communication Standard:	Written	-----	1.5	
Nonachievement Factor:	Behavior	-----	3.25	
History Achievement: 2.9 Overall: 3.0				

American Literature		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Language Arts Standard 1: The Writing Process		-----	2.5		
Language Arts Standard 2: Usage, Style, and Rhetoric		-----		3.25	
Language Arts Standard 3: Research: Process and Product		-----			3.75
Language Arts Standard 4: The Reading Process					
Language Arts Standard 5: Reading Comprehension					
Language Arts Standard 6: Literary/Text Analysis		-----	2.5		
Language Arts Standard 7: Listening and Speaking		-----	2.25		
Language Arts Standard 8: The Nature of Language					
Language Arts Standard 9: Literature		----	1.25		
Reasoning Standard: Analyzing Relationships		-----			3.75
Nonachievement Factor: Attendance		-----	2.5		
Nonachievement Factor: Behavior		-----	2.5		
Lang. Arts Achievement: 2.58 Overall: 2.65					
Physical Education		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Physical Education Standard 1: Movement Forms...		-----	2.25		
Physical Education Standard 2: Motor Skill Development		-----			3.75
Physical Education Standard 3: Physical Fitness [1]		-----		3.0	
Physical Education Standard 4: Physical Fitness [2]		-----	2.5		
Reasoning Standard: Problem Solving		-----			3.25
Nonachievement Factor: Attendance		-----	2.75		
Nonachievement Factor: Behavior		-----	2.5		
Nonachievement Factor: Effort		-----	1.5		
Phys. Ed. Achievement: 2.88 Overall: 2.75					
Chorus		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Music Standard 1: Vocal Music		-----			3.75
Music Standard 2: Instrumental Music		-----			3.75
Music Standard 3: Music Composition		-----		3.25	
Music Standard 4: Music Theory		-----	2.25		
Music Standard 5: Music Appreciation		-----			4.0
Reasoning Standard: Classifying		-----	2.75		
Communication Factor: Written		-----		3.25	
Music Achievement: 3.04 Overall: 3.33					
Geography		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Geography Standard 1: Places and Regions		-----	2.25		
Geography Standard 2: Human Systems		-----		3.5	
Geography Standard 3: Physical Systems		-----			3.75
Geography Standard 4: Uses of Geography		-----	2.75		
Geography Standard 5: Environment and Society		-----			3.75
Geography Standard 6: The World in Spatial Terms		-----	2.25		
Reasoning Standard: Making Deductions		-----			3.5
Nonachievement Factor: Effort		-----	2.75		
Geography Achievement: 3.04 Overall: 3.06					

APPENDIX J
Follow-up Survey (4)

This survey is to be completed after you have read the literature which describes in detail Benchmark #3, “Quality assessments and properly recorded evidence of achievement will be used when determining grades on student work.”

1. Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #3.

- A. Very well
- B. Fairly well
- C. Not well enough

2. If you chose “fairly well” or “not well”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very well”?

3. Please rate how easy it is for you to understand the reasoning behind which assessments to use and how to set up gradebooks and reports cards under standards-based grading.

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

4. If you chose “somewhat easy” or “not easy at all”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very easy”?

5. Of the problems associated with standards-based grading listed in the initial document you received, which do you think might apply to implementing benchmark #3?

6. In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #3 more clear.

7. How relevant do you think benchmark #3 is to improving student success?

- A. Very Relevant
- B. Relevant enough
- C. Not relevant

8. If you chose “relevant enough” or “not relevant”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very relevant”?

9. Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #3.

- | |
|---|
| <p>A. Positive</p> <p>B. Neutral</p> <p>C. Negative</p> |
|---|

10. If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?

11. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #3? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

APPENDIX K

Educational Literature on Benchmark #4

“Term grades will be determined in a manner that accurately represents students’ attainment of the standards and promotes student learning.”

Benchmark #4 covers the creation of assessments, rubrics, and gradebooks which accurately reflect students’ attainment of performance standards. Benchmark #4 dictates that a teacher makes sure students are aware of what their grades mean and what they can do to improve.

Grading Using Rubrics:

Under standards-based grading assessments are scored using rubrics that cover more than one topic, whereas under traditional grading methods assessments receive one overall score. The reason for using rubrics to score each assessment in that many, if not all, assessments in a given course cover more than one performance standard.

Generic rubrics should be made and then adapted for each performance standard. It should then be decided which standards are being addressed on a particular assessment and the rubrics for each standard should be included in the final rubric for that assessment. Below are two examples Marzano gives in *Transforming Classroom Grading* that illustrate how a generic rubric can be adapted for a specific standards followed by an example of how those rubrics would appear when combined for one assessment.

A4: Example Rubrics for Information-Based Topics

Topic-Specific and Generic Rubric for [an] Information-Based Topic (Science Standard: Precipitation)
(Marzano 2000, p. 50)

Generic Rubric for Information-based Topics	Topic-Specific Rubric for Precipitation
4. The student has a complete and detailed understanding of the information important to the topic	4. The student has a complete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation).
3. The student has a complete knowledge understanding of the information important to the topic but not in great detail	3. The student has a complete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation). There are no misconceptions in the student’s knowledge
2. The student has an incomplete understanding of the topic/or misconceptions about some information. However, the student maintains a basic understanding of the topic.	2. The student has an incomplete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation) or has some misconceptions about the information. However, the student still has a basic understanding of the topic.
1. The student’s understanding of the topic is so incomplete or has so many misconceptions that the student cannot be said to understand the topic.	1. The student’s understanding of the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation) is so incomplete and/or there are so many misconceptions that the student does not possess even a basic understanding of the topic.
0. No judgment can be made about the student’s understanding of the topic.	0. No judgment can be made about the student’s understanding of [precipitation].

A5: Example Rubrics for Process or Skill-Based Topics

Topic Specific and Generic Rubric for Process or Skill-Based Topics (Science Standard: Reading Tables) (p. 51)

Generic Rubric for Processes or Skills	Topic-Specific Rubric for Reading Tables
4. The student can perform the skill or process important to the topic with no significant errors and with fluency. Additionally, the student understands the key features of the skill or process.	4. The student can interpret tables without making significant errors. Additionally, the student performs the process with fluency and understands key features of tables.
3. The student can perform the skill or process important to the topic without making significant errors.	3. The student interprets tables without making significant errors.
2. The student makes some significant errors when performing the skill or process important to the topic but still accomplishes a rough approximation of the skill or process.	2. The student makes some significant errors when interpreting the tables but still accomplishes a basic approximation of the process.
1. The student makes so many errors in performing the skill or process important to the topic that he or she cannot actually perform the skill or process.	1. The student makes so many errors when interpreting tables that he or she is not capable of reading tables.
0. No judgment can be made about the student's ability to perform the skill or process.	0. No judgment can be made about the student's ability to interpret tables.

Multiple Topic Specific Rubric Assessment (Reading Precipitation Tables) (p. 50-51)

Reading Tables	Precipitation
4. The student can interpret tables without making significant errors. Additionally, the student performs the process with fluency and understands key features of tables.	4. The student has a complete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation).
3. The student interprets tables without making significant errors.	3. The student has a complete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation). There are no misconceptions in the student's knowledge
2. The student makes some significant errors when interpreting the tables but still accomplishes a basic approximation of the process.	2. The student has an incomplete but not detailed understanding of the information important to the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation) or has some misconceptions about the information. However, the student still has a basic understanding of the topic.
1. The student makes so many errors when interpreting tables that he or she is not capable of reading tables.	1. The student's understanding of the topic of precipitation (particularly the relationship between temperature and precipitation) is so incomplete and/or there are so many misconceptions that the student does not possess even a basic understanding of the topic.
0. No judgment can be made about the student's ability to interpret tables.	0. No judgment can be made about the student's understanding of [precipitation].

From these tables, it can be seen that the creation of generic four point rubrics for each standard is the first step towards creating topic-specific rubrics that can assess for skills in multiple performance standards.

Converting overall assignment scores into scores on the four point rubrics: If an assessment, say a quiz or test, has more than four questions on it, it can be converted to the four point rubric relatively easy. For example, if a test has 30 forced-choice questions, you would first want to determine which standard each question is assessing and split the 30 points accordingly. If 15 questions assess for understanding of precipitation and 15 assess for understanding of tables, a teacher would know they need a rubric that covers both of those performance standards. If a student gets 13 out of 15 on the precipitation questions, to convert that score into a score on the four point rubric, use percentages. 13 out of 15 points is 86%. 86% of 4 is roughly 3.4. Scores should be rounded to the nearest half, so the student would receive a 3.5 on the four point rubric for precipitation (Marzano, 2000, p.67).

Gradebooks: A standards-based gradebook includes category divisions for each performance standard covered in a term. Each assessment is lined up with each performance standard and corresponding scores are entered below each performance standard that was assessed for. Final scores are the average of all scores for each assessment within a particular standard. The following table from *Transforming Classroom Grading* illustrates how this would look (p. 69)

A6: Calculating Final Grades

Student: Bill	[Standard] 1: Precipitation	[Standard] 2: Ocean Currents	[Standard] 3: Measurement of Temperature	[Standard] 4: Reading Tables	[Standard] 5: Estimation
Quiz: Sept. 10	1.5		1.0		2.0
Homework: Sept 10	2.0			1.5	
Homework: Sept. 15	1.5				2.0
Homework: Sept. 17	2.0				
Quiz: Sept. 20	1.5		1.5		2.0
Unit Test #1: Sept. 22	2.0		1.5	1.5	
Performance Task: Sept. 24	2.5		1.5	1.5	2.0
Homework: Sept. 29		2.0			
Quiz: Oct. 1		2.0			
Homework: Oct. 6			2.0	1.5	
Quiz: Oct. 8		2.0		2.0	
Homework: Oct. 11		2.0			
Homework: Oct. 13		2.0			
Quiz: Oct. 15		2.5			
Unit Test-Performance Task: Oct. 6	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	
Final Topic Score	2.25	2.5	1.5	1.75	2.0

Teachers are expected to demonstrate the reaching of this benchmark, by submitting their gradebook for review at the end of the first semester of the implementation process

APPENDIX L
Follow-Up Survey (5)

This survey is to be completed after you have read the literature which describes in detail Benchmark #4, “Term grades will be determined in a manner that accurately represents students’ attainment of the standards and promotes student learning,”

1. Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #4.

- A. Very well
- B. Fairly well
- C. Not well enough

2. If you chose “fairly well” or “not well”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very well”?

3. Please rate how easy it is for you to understand the reasoning behind using four point rubrics to assess each standard on every assessment.

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

4. If you chose “somewhat easy” or “not easy at all”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very easy”?

5. Of the problems associated with standards-based grading listed in the initial document you received, which do you think might apply to implementing benchmark #4?

6. In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #4 more clear.

7. How relevant do you think benchmark #4 is to improving student success?

- A. Very Relevant
- B. Relevant enough

C. Not relevant

8. If you chose “relevant enough” or “not relevant”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very relevant”?

9. Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #4.

A. Positive

B. Neutral

C. Negative

10. If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?

11. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #4? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

APPENDIX M

Educational Literature on Benchmark #5

“Teachers will involve students in the assessment and grading process throughout the learning cycle in an age appropriate manner.”

Student-Generated Assessments: A key component of standards-based grading involves students having multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of course standards. If a student scores below a 2 overall on a particular standard, the teacher must intervene and provide the student with another opportunity to raise their score to a 2 or better. Re-teaching and reassessing a standard can, in some cases, be avoided by allowing students to take ownership of their assessment.

Under a standards-based grading policy, students are to be given opportunities to propose their own methods for demonstrating their mastery of a performance standard. In doing so, students will need to think critically about the expectations of a standard, and teachers will be able to collaborate with an individual student to find out where there may be misunderstanding and how the student might be better able to demonstrate their knowledge.

Robert Marzano, in his book, *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading*, gives the following example of student proposing an assessment in Language Arts (p.75):

I have a 2.0 in the learning goal about literary elements right now, and I want to move up to a score of 3.0. I think I will select a story we have read and show how changing one element would influence other elements. For example, I will explain how changing just one character trait would influence the story’s message and how changing the setting could influence the plot. By showing how all the elements work together, I think I can prove I understand the goal on literary elements at score 3.0.

Creating opportunities for students to propose assessments like this will also save teachers time, as they will not need to plan each reassessment.

Expectations: It is assumed that if an instructor is attempting to involve students in the assessment and grading process that they have already designed acceptable standards-based assessments, rubrics, and gradebooks. To achieve benchmark #5 it is expected that teachers have made time for students to propose assessments that will allow them to raise their scores in any standard. This can be demonstrated by allowing administration to observe a student’s submission of a self-proposed assessment.

APPENDIX N
Follow-up Survey (6)

This survey is to be completed after you have read the literature which describes in detail Benchmark #5, “Teachers will involve students in the assessment and grading process throughout the learning cycle in an age appropriate manner.”

1. Please rate how well you currently understand benchmark #5.

- A. Very well
- B. Fairly well
- C. Not well enough

2. If you chose “fairly well” or “not well”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very well”?

3. Please rate how easy it is for you to understand the reasoning behind including students in assessment and grading practices.

- A. Very easy
- B. Somewhat easy
- C. Not easy at all

4. If you chose “somewhat easy” or “not easy at all”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very easy”?

5. Of the problems associated with standards-based grading listed in the initial document you received, which do you think might apply to implementing benchmark #5?

6. In your own words, please describe what could be done to make the document more pleasing and the expectations of benchmark #5 more clear.

7. How relevant do you think benchmark #5 is to improving student success?

- A. Very Relevant
- B. Relevant enough
- C. Not relevant

8. If you chose “relevant enough” or “not relevant”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “very relevant”?

9. Please rate your overall impression of the document describing benchmark #5.

- | |
|---|
| <p>A. Positive</p> <p>B. Neutral</p> <p>C. Negative</p> |
|---|

10. If you chose “neutral” or “negative”, what would need to be done to the document for you to change your answer to “positive”?

11. What general suggestions do you have for improving the literature you have been provided on benchmark #5? If you would like, you may make marks and suggestions on the actual document.

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